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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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US, Iran hold talks in Pak as ceasefire holds

WH rejects report of releasing blocked Iranian funds

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE, 11 APRIL

Direct negotiations between the US and Iran commenced on Saturday in Islamabad to find a lasting solution to the West Asia war, Pakistan's state media and a government official said, as the world waits on edge.

The talks commenced after Pakistan Prime Minister Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Asim Munir and other officials held separate meetings the US and Iran teams.

The US delegation is led by Vice President JD Vance. He is accompanied by President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff. The Iranian delegation is led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and includes Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi with other leaders.

Notably, these are the first direct negotiations between the US and Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and subsequent hostage crisis.

The two sides travelled to Islamabad four days after Iran and the US announced a two-week ceasefire that was thrown for a lurch after Israel's bombardment on Lebanon killed at least 300 people. Iran has said that a ceasefire in Lebanon was a precursor to the talks.

US Presdient JD Vance with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad —*PTI*

Tehran has said that another "precondition" was the release of frozen assets, which the White House said did not happen, despite media reports claimed that the US had release them.

Other key issues include Iran's nuclear programme, which the Trump administration sometimes said was the reason they launched the war, and the opening of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has said that it wants to exercise its "sovereignty" over the Strait, through which the nearly a fifth of the world's oil once passed as the de facto closure of it has sent oil prices spiralling.

The US is also looking for curbs on Iran's Axis of Resistance – militant groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis – and on Tehran's ballistic missile programme.

The Iran-US talks reportedly began after a five-hour delay. The outcome of the talks was not available at the time of publishing, but more discussions were reportedly scheduled for Sunday.

As the talks were underway, Trump began posting on his Truth Social, saying that Iran had "lost" the war. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Pg 2, 4, 5, 6, 7*

Pak jets escort Vance's plane

Pakistani F-16 fighter jets escorted the aircraft carrying US Vice President JD Vance to Islamabad. Visuals showed five PAF F-16s escorting the US Air Force's Boeing C-32A plane in Pakistani airspace before it landed at Nur Khan airbase near Islamabad

Indian ship crosses Hormuz after truce

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

An India-flagged LPG tanker, Jag Vikram, has become the first Indian vessel to cross the Strait of Hormuz following the temporary two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran, signalling a cautious easing of maritime disruption in West Asia.

Ship-tracking data showed the tanker transited the strategic waterway between Friday night and Saturday morning and was later located in the Gulf of Oman, heading east. The government confirmed the vessel, carrying around 20,400 tonnes of LPG with 24 crew members, is expected to reach Mumbai on 15 April.

Jag Vikram is the ninth Indian ship to exit the Persian Gulf since early March, while about 15 remain stranded. Owned by Great Eastern Shipping Company, it has a deadweight of over 26,000 tonnes.

At the peak of the crisis, 28 Indian vessels were in the region. Hundreds of ships, including tankers and gas carriers, remain affected.

India, heavily reliant on Gulf energy supplies, sources most of its crude, gas and LPG through Hormuz. Disruptions had forced supply curbs, though LPG and gas allocations are now being gradually restored, with priority given to households and transport sectors. —*PTI*

MOJTABA'S FACE, LEGS DISFIGURED, BUT HE'S MENTALLY SHARP: REPORT

Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is recovering from severe facial and leg injuries sustained in the 28 February airstrike that killed his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, according to Reuters. His face was reportedly disfigured and he may have lost a leg, though this remains unverified. The 56-year-old is mentally sharp and participating in decision-making via audio links, including on war strategy and talks with Washington in Islamabad. His condition and whereabouts remain undisclosed, with no public appearances since 8 March. Agencies

Asha Bhosle hospitalised after cardiac arrest

MUMBAI, 11 APRIL

Legendary playback singer Asha Bhosle was admitted to Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital on Saturday evening after suffering cardiac arrest, sources said. The 92-year-old singer also had pulmonary issues, they said. Bhosle, with a career spanning eight decades, is known for her versatility. She is the younger sister of the late legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar. —*PTI*

Ashwini approves B'luru-Mumbai Vande Bharat

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has given approval for a new Vande Bharat sleeper train between Bengaluru and Mumbai. This comes about three months after the flagging off of the Kamakhya-Howrah sleeper train. The latest move is a part of the Centre's plan to facilitate long distance train travel in the country by speed up the production of 12 new rakes by December this year. Earlier, the railway minister in his letter to BJP MP PC Mohan on 5 April, 2026, had announced his approval to the new train service.—*Agencies*

Indian-born Cheetah gives birth to 4 cubs in Kuno

SHEOPUR, 11 APRIL

A 25-month-old Indian-born cheetah has given birth to four cubs at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, marking the first recorded wild birth at the sanctuary, officials said on Saturday. Union Minister Bhupender Yadav called it a "historic moment", noting it is also the first such instance involving an Indian-born female, an offspring of South African cheetah Gamini. The birth takes India's cheetah population to 57. Since 2023, 49 cubs have been born in 11 litters, with 37 surviving.—*PTI*

Govt doubles windfall tax on diesel, ATF

NEW DELHI, 11 APR

The government on Saturday more than doubled the export duty on diesel to Rs 55.5 per litre from Rs 21.5, while raising the levy on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) to Rs 42 per litre from Rs 29.5, with immediate effect. Export duty on petrol remains nil, indicating adequate domestic supplies.

The sharp revision reflects efforts to curb exports of refined fuels and ensure domestic availability amid volatile global oil prices following the West Asia conflict.

Duties were first imposed on March 26 after crude prices surged during the war involving the United States, Israel and Iran.

Government sources said the move is not aimed at boosting revenue but at preventing exporters from taking undue advantage of global price differentials.

At the same time, officials are reviewing tax structures to shield the aviation sector from a potential price shock. The increase in ATF levy is aimed at stabilising airfares and protecting airline margins.

The windfall tax will not apply to fuel refined in Special Economic Zones.

Global energy markets have been disrupted since the conflict began on 28 February, though a temporary two-week ceasefire agreed on 8 April has eased some concerns. —*PTI*

Youth Congress leader hacked to death at Dharwad home

DHARWAD, 11 APRIL

A Youth Congress leader was brutally murdered after assailants barged into his residence in Karnataka's Dharwad district on Friday night, police said.

The victim, Fairoz Pathan, 32, was attacked at his house in Hashminagar in the Malapur area between 9.30pm and 10pm. Armed with sharp weapons, three to four attackers broke into the house and assaulted him, causing grievous injuries. He succumbed to excessive blood loss while being shifted to hospital, officials said. Pathan, who was active in local politics and had earlier been associated with NSUI was scheduled to get married on 26 April.

According to Police Commissioner N Shashikumar, the assailants fled immediately after the attack. CCTV footage from the vicinity has captured the incident and is expected to aid the investigation. Police have detained two suspects, Arbaz Pathan and Gulab, who are believed to be masterminds behind the crime. Based on their interrogation, four individuals — Mohammad Shah, Saddam, Gaus and Parvez — have been identified as prime accused and are currently absconding. A manhunt has been launched.

Family members said the attackers forced entry after Pathan ran inside and bolted the door. Others present in the house, including a woman, were also assaulted when they tried to intervene, and two mobile phones were taken.

Preliminary investigations suggest possible personal or political rivalry, though the exact motive is yet to be established. —*Salar News*

5-YEAR-OLD GIRL RAPED, STUFFED IN SACK & THROWN IN WELL

DURG, 11 APRIL

A five-year-old girl was kidnapped, raped, and later stuffed inside a sack before being dumped near a well in Chhattisgarh's Durg district, a police officer said on Saturday. The incident occurred under Utai police station limits on Friday afternoon when the girl, after returning home from school, went to a nearby shop to buy chocolates. The accused, Dhaneshwar Sahu, 35, was present at the shop and allegedly lured the child to his house, claiming he would give her chocolates.

"When the girl did not return home for a long time, her family members and local villagers launched a search. After a two-hour-long effort, two youths from the village spotted movement inside a sack near a well. Upon opening the sack, the minor was found inside with her mouth gagged with a pillow cover. She was in a state of shock," the police official said.

Her medical examination confirmed rape, and the accused was subsequently arrested, said Patan area Sub-Divisional Officer of Police Anoop Lakra. Her condition is now stable. A team from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) collected evidence from the scene. The incident sparked outrage, with villagers surrounding the police station demanding capital punishment. —*PTI*

BENGALURU PROTESTS AGAINST TRANS BILL

Activists protest against the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026 at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Saturday. They allege that the proposed government screening committees to determine gender would lead to harassment —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Karnataka HC asks Lamborghini owner to sweep roads

BENGALURU, 11 APRIL

Karnataka High Court has let a Bengaluru man off in a case of dangerously driving his Lamborghini on Mysuru road by ordering him to sweep the road as part of service to the community for his offence.

In an oral observation, the High Court Justice Nagaprasanna said, "There are various kinds of community service. You go in a Lamborghini, sweep the garbage on the street, and come back in the same Lamborghini. You have violated traffic, so you will teach traffic."

The remark by a single-judge bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna came while hearing a petition filed by BR Chiranth, a resident of CV Raman Nagar. Chiranth had approached the court seeking to quash a case registered against him by the police for his alleged reckless driving.

The case for dangerous driving was filed on the basis of a complaint by police Sub-Inspector R Ramaswamy, who came across the incident on the social media platform X. The video showed a Lamborghini being driven at high speed in a reckless manner on Mysuru Road. The complaint also mentioned about a modified silencer on the vehicle that he said was likely to pose a threat to public. —*Agencies*

'ONLY STATUTORY ENTITLEMENT'

Voting or contesting polls not a fundamental right: SC

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The Supreme Court reiterated that the right to vote or contest an election is not a fundamental right, but only a statutory entitlement.

This means that these rights exist only to the extent provided by law, a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan said on Friday.

These rights are also distinct from each other, said a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan, adding that the right to contest is subject to stricter regulations like qualifications, disqualifications and institutional requirements.

CENTRE ASKS SC TO END PILs

The Centre has urged the Supreme Court to bar public interest litigations (PILs), questioning their relevance during a hearing on the Sabarimala case on Wednesday. It argued that the time has come to reconsider such petitions. The court, however, pushed back, with the Chief Justice stating there is no need for a blanket ban as courts are already cautious in handling PILs.

A PIL is a legal petition filed to protect or enforce the rights of the public or a community, allowing individuals or organisations to approach courts on behalf of those unable to do so due to disadvantage.

The court was dealing with a case about election rules for District Milk Producers' Co-operative Unions in Rajasthan.

A petition had challenged several by-laws framed by the unions that prescribed qualifications for contesting the elections to the board of directors. The Rajasthan High Court had earlier held the provisions ultra vires.

The petitioners then approached the Supreme Court, which allowed the appeal and set aside the High Court verdict.

The SC said, "It is well settled that neither the right to vote nor the right to contest an election is a fundamental right."

Citing earlier verdicts, the bench said that the Supreme Court had earlier held that such rights "are purely statutory in nature and exist only to the extent conferred by the statute."

"While the right to vote enables a member to vote, the right to contest an election or to be elected is a distinct and additional right which may legitimately be made subject to qualifications, eligibility conditions, and disqualifications," the judges added. —*Agencies*

Leopard dies after fight with boar in Gundlupet

MYSURU, 11 APRIL

A leopard was killed by a wild boar after a fight at Bommanahalli in Gundlupet taluk. The incident came to light after farmers spotted the leopard lying in a pool of blood at an agriculture field in forest fringe villages at Bommanahalli on Saturday. According to Bandipur ACF Naveenkumar, the carcass of the leopard was found near the Kundakere forest range of Bandipur tiger reserve. Officials rushed to the spot after receiving information. The leopard was wounded fatally near the neck, chest and other body parts. "The leopard had a fight with a wild boar. The leopard engages in fighting with wild boars assuming they can hunt them," he said. Post-mortem was conducted, samples collected and sent to laboratory, remains burnt as per procedures. *—SALAR NEWS*

— PTI

Journos must uphold values of constitution: CM

BIDAR, 11 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said that journalists must introspect whether they are truly upholding the ideals of the Constitution and avoid speculative journalism that focuses on trivial issues without considering its impact on society. The CM said in a statement on X that he addressed the 40th State Journalists' Conference organised by the Karnataka Working Journalists' Association and the Bidar District Working Journalists' Association where he said sensational or speculative reporting could be dangerous and urged professionals to think about the consequences of repeatedly highlighting minor issues. Siddarmaiah noted that both BR Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi worked as journalists earlier in their careers and became the voice of the voiceless. *–SALAR NEWS*

Lokayukta seizes 6kg gold, 5kg silver from Belagavi AEE

BELAGAVI, 11 APRIL

The raids on the residence of Ajay Singh Rajput, Assistant Executive Engineer of the Belagavi Urban Development Cell, which began on Thursday, concluded on Saturday. During the raid, Lokayukta officials found illegal assets worth over Rs 14 crore from his house and offices.

Officials stated that this is many times higher than his known sources of income. Simultaneous raids were conducted at seven locations, including Anjaneya Nagar in Belagavi. During the operation, officials seized 6 kg of gold and 5 kg of silver ornaments. Additionally, it was discovered that he had Rs 3.12 crore in bank deposits.

Documents also revealed that Rajput had purchased 18 plots in various places in Saundatti, Hukkeri, and Hubballi. Officials further stated that he owned luxury cars and bike *—Salar News*

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'Centre doesn't want to give K'taka its fuel quota'

CM may appoint representative to talk to the Centre: HM

BENGALURU, 11 APRIL

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Saturday said that the Centre does not want Karnataka to be given the fuel and LPG allocations it deserves amid the West Asia conflict.

"The State has already written a letter to the Centre regarding this," he told press on Saturday. "We have asked them to give us the allocation we deserve. The Centre does not want us to be given an LPG allocation. We do not want one thing to happen to another. The CM also spoke. The Central Government is not responding to our request."

Parameshwara suggested that the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah might appoint a dedicated representative to resolve the supply crisis following the conclusion of the ongoing elections.

"After the elections, the CM may probably assign someone to handle this problem," he added. It was not immediately clear what elections he was referring to.

Earlier Siddaramaiah wrote to Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, seeking the Centre's urgent intervention and arguing that the State was receiving only 1,000 cylinders per day for commercial use against the demand of 50,000, forcing hotels and business to shut shop.

Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Minister, KH Muniyappa has said that there is no "actual" shortage for domestic or public transport needs.

However, he said that private LPG companies, which used to provide 65 per cent of LPG for auto rickshaws, had halted operations or hiked prices, creating an artificial shortage, which resulted in the long lines of autos formed across the State. He said that the Centre must intervene to sort out the issue. *—Agencies*

Autorickshaws queue up to fill gas on Deve Gowda Road, RT Nagar, in Bengaluru, on Saturday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

Coastal K'taka to face heatwave, mercury to hit 35°C

BENGALURU, 11 APRIL

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a heat wave and heat stroke alert for Karnataka's coastal districts—Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada—starting on Saturday. Authorities have advised people to avoid direct exposure to sunlight, particularly between 12pm and 4pm.

Temperatures in coastal regions are expected to rise above 35°C from Saturday.

A yellow alert has been declared for Uttara Kannada and Udupi districts, while dry weather conditions are likely to prevail in Dakshina Kannada.

Dry weather conditions are expected to continue in several interior districts, including Belagavi, Bidar, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Haveri, Gadag, Dharwad, Kalaburagi, Koppal, Ballari, Raichur, Yadgir, and Vijayanagara, the IMD stated.

Intensifying cyclonic activity over the sea has triggered rain across Bengaluru on Friday evening, a trend expected to continue through Saturday.

The Health Department has issued guidelines to prevent heat-related illnesses. Citizens are advised to avoid going out during peak afternoon hours, stay hydrated, and limit caffeine and sugary drink consumption.

The IMD also forecast heavy rains for neighbouring states Keralam and Andhra Pradesh. It said thunderstorms were likely to hit Andhra Pradesh from 10 April, and issued an orange alert for northern Keralam. *—Salar News*

Congress doesn't want ordinary women in politics: Shobha

BENGALURU, 11 APRIL

Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje on Saturday accused the Congress of viewing national progress through a narrow "election lens" and said that the party didn't want "ordinary women" in politics.

The attack comes after the Congress criticised the Centre's move to amend the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, or the Women's Reservation Act as indulging in politics amid the upcoming elections in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. The Congress added that it came paired with the "unconstitutional" delimitation exercise, where the number of Lok Sabha seats will increase to 816 with 273 of them reserved for women for the 2029 general elections.

"I don't think that Parliament debating the women's reservation bill will affect the State elections," Karandlaje said. "Mallikarjun Kharge should clarify whether he was opposed to this bill or for discussing it now."

Questioning the stance of the Congress, she said, "There was a discussion on women's reservation during UPA rule... only crocodile tears were shed for the issue, and they opposed it a few times."

"They don't want ordinary women to come to Parliament except the likes of Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi," she added. Meanwhile, BJP Mahila Morcha State President C Manjula said Mahila Morcha will organise women's conferences in all districts of the State in support of the Nari Shakti Vandan Act. A signature campaign will be held in support of the Bill, starting on Sunday in KR Puram led by Karandlaje. *—PTI*

> **The BJP has copy pasted (Congress') guarantee schemes in West Bengal. It has promised to give Rs 3,000 instead of Rs 2,000 per month under the Griha Lakshmi scheme (to women). It has offered free bus travel to women like in our State. The logic is that if another party brings the scheme, it is anti-people. But if the BJP brings the same scheme, it is people-friendly.**
>
> -Dinesh Gundu Rao, Health Minister

Decide on Kannada use in Kasaragod: Keralam HC

KOCHI, 11 APRIL

The Keralam High Court has instructed the state government to consider and decide within two months a plea seeking the implementation of a 1982 circular allowing the use of Kannada in official correspondence in Kasaragod taluk.

A bench comprising CJ Soumen Sen and Justice Syam Kumar VM issued the order following a PIL filed by a Kasaragod lawyer. The lawyer stated that government offices in Kasaragod and Manjeshwar taluks were not accepting applications in Kannada.

The 5 March 1982 circular, issued by the District Collector of Kannur, declared Kasaragod as a Kannada-speaking area and permitted the language's use in official matters. The lawyer had also submitted a representation to the government in January this year, requesting all departments to implement the circular, but no action had been taken.

The government informed the court that an appropriate authority would decide on the representation if directed by the court. The bench directed the government to consider and decide the matter "in accordance with law, after affording a reasonable opportunity of hearing to the petitioner within eight weeks from the date of receipt of a copy of this judgment." *—PTI*

Pvt firms can't take Gruha Lakshmi funds, says CM

BENGALURU, 11 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has directed immediate action over complaints that private finance companies and microfinance institutions are forcibly deducting money from the accounts of women beneficiaries under the State government's Gruha Lakshmi scheme towards loan repayments.

Acting on an appeal by Karnataka Guarantee SchemesImplementation Authority's vice president and MLC Dinesh Gooligowda, the CM instructed the Chief Secretary to issue directions to officials concerned.

The Chief Secretary has written to the Additional Chief Secretaries of the Home and Urban Development Departments, all Deputy Commissioners and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officers, directing them to take urgent steps to prevent such deductions.

Mr Gooligowda, in his letter to the CM and DyCM DK Shivakumar, said that certain private finance companies, microfinance institutions and SHGs were deducting the monthly assistance of Rs 2,000 from beneficiaries' bank accounts without their knowledge. The Gruha Lakshmi scheme, a key welfare initiative of the State government, provides financial assistance to women to meet household expenses and enhance economic independence. The CM said that such practices defeat the very objective of the scheme. — Salar News

'STOP ANIMAL CRUELTY'

Activists demand an end to 'cruelty' against street dogs after the recent Supreme Court ruling, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, on Saturday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

K'taka fast-tracks investment: Patil

BENGALURU, 11 APRIL

Karnataka Minister MB Patil on Saturday said the State government has fast-tracked approvals for investment projects. He said that since 2022, the State has approved 2,028 projects worth Rs 5.11 lakh crore, which could create 7.16 lakh jobs. Of these, Rs 69,564 crore investment has already been realised, generating 1.06 lakh jobs, he added.

The Minister for Large & Medium Industries said on X that the government had overhauled 18 key approvals, cutting land use change clearance time from 120 to 45 days, fire NOC from 60 to 21 days, factory plan approvals from 30 to 14 days, and electrical approvals to just 10 days. Meanwhile, the government has floated a tender for a 80,000-seat capacity stadium at Anekal.*—Agencies*

2-DAY FESTIVAL

Desi Dal Mela kicks off at Mysuru

MYSURU, 11 APRIL

The two-day 'Desi Dal Mela' organised by the Sahaja Samrudha, Sahaja Seeds, and the Department of Horticulture – Kisan Mall, at Nanjaraja Bahadur Choultry in Mysuru kicked off on Saturday. Filmfare award-winning actor Akshata Pandavapura inaugurated the mela and said that the real India could be seen in the diversity of the pules and urged people to consume dal-based foods instead of junk food. "Pulses provide balanced nutrition to the body and help conserve agricultural diversity," she said, noting that consuming more pulsus would also support farmers.

Over 100 pulse varieties are on display across 30 stalls, including green chickpeas, black horse gram, black gram, field beans, and black cowpeas. Stalls also offered organic products, seeds, pickles, cold-pressed oils, value-added products, and fruit saplings. Visitors could also enjoy jowar rotti meals, pigeon pea payasa, pulse-based sweets, vadas, and juices made from neglected fruits.

Devadhanya Farmer Producer Company has set up a stall selling high-quality jowari pulses while the Karnataka Pulse Development Board is selling 'Bheema' brand Gulbarga pigeon pea.

The Hulikadu Farmer Producer Company from Heggadadevanakote is offering pearl yam powder and colorful vegetable powders.

Dharwad farmers gained attention by bringing Kari Kadale (Black chickpeas), which they said had immense medicinal value. Unlike the common red variety, these beans turn water black when soaked. The blackened water can combat gastric issues and even dissolve kidney or bladder stones. *—Salar News*

Filmfare award winning actor Akshata Pandavapura and others at the 'Desi Dal Mela' in Mysuru on Saturday *—SALAR*

Cong Minority Chief resigns after bypoll row

BENGALURU, 11 APRIL

Karnataka Congress Minority Department President **K Abdul Jabbar** announced his resignation from the post on Saturday, a day after a group of Muslim leaders accused members of their own party of "conspiring" to defeat the official candidate in the Davangere South bypolls.

Jabbar, an MLC, was an aspirant for the Congress ticket.

"It has been an honour for me to serve as Chairman of the KPCC Minority department and have worked to the best of my ability during assembly elections 2023 and followed by Parliament polls and many such occasions whenever the party needed the minority department and showed results," Jabbar has said in a letter to the party.

"Minority voters are the backbone of the Congress and certainly deserve better".

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the KPCC President, confirmed Jabbar's resignation.

"I won't speak about this now… I will seek a report from local leaders after that I will speak," he told reporters.

On Friday, a group of Muslim leaders alleged that there was a conspiracy by senior party leaders to defeat Samarth Mallikarjun, the party's official candidate in Davangere South and alleged that the conspiracy sought to project the Congress as having "betrayed" Muslims.

Although the leaders did not name anyone, sources said the attack was directed at Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan and Jabbar among others. *—PTI*

‘BJP won't let Bengalis become minority’

Modi launches attacks on TMC over ‘syndicate raj’ and vows UCC implementation in WB

JANGIPUR/KUSHMANDI, 11 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday intensified the BJP’s pitch on identity and infiltration in poll-bound West Bengal, promising to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) to end what he called the “politics of appeasement” and asserting that the BJP would not allow Bengalis to become a minority in the state.

Addressing a rally at Jangipur in Muslim-majority Murshidabad district, Modi framed the upcoming assembly polls as a battle to protect West Bengal’s identity and future, while accusing the ruling TMC of thriving on appeasement politics and the support of “infiltrators”.

“The nation’s security is of paramount importance to us. The BJP’s resolve is to implement UCC in West Bengal to end the politics of appeasement forever,” Modi said.

Claiming that rapid demographic changes were taking place in several parts of the state, Modi alleged that the TMC had abandoned its old slogan of ‘Maa-Mati-Manush’ and was now depending on infiltrators and vote-bank politics to retain power.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated by a ‘Gomira’ mask during a public rally, in Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal, on Saturday —*PTI*

The PM also alleged that the TMC, sensing defeat in the polls, had begun circulating AI-generated videos.

Though he did not name anyone, the remarks appeared to be aimed at a video circulated by the ruling party purportedly showing Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) founder Humayun Kabir.

Stepping up his attack on the Mamata Banerjee government, Modi alleged that the TMC, which had come to power with the slogan ‘Maa-Mati-Manush’, has become a “carbon copy” of the Left Front.

Additionally, he launched a blistering attack on the TMC, accusing it of turning West Bengal into a state run by “syndicates”, while promising action on atrocities against women if the BJP comes to power.

He said the TMC had “handed over even the game of football to its syndicates”, referring to the fiasco during Argentine football legend Lionel Messi’s visit to Kolkata last December. —*PTI*

5-hr-long raid at ex-WB education minister’s home

An Enforcement Directorate team on Saturday conducted a five-hour raid at former West Bengal education minister Partha Chatterjee's residence in connection with the school jobs scam, ED officials said. The agency team searched his home ahead of the assembly elections to be held on 23 and 29 April. ED officials reached Chatterjee’s house in Naktala area around 10.45 am after central forces cordoned off the premises. The central agency also questioned him, an ED official said. The team, including a woman official, left the residence at 4:30 pm, but did not talk to the waiting media persons on the nearby road. —*PTI*

BJP, EC tried to invalidate my candidature: Mamata

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee during a public rally ahead of Assembly elections, in Keshiary, Paschim Medinipur, on Saturday —*PTI*

KOLKATA, 11 APRIL

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday claimed that the BJP, with the help of the Election Commission (EC), tried to get her candidature from the Bhabanipur seat in south Kolkata cancelled by attempting to file false cases against her, but the bid was foiled by TMC workers and the public.

Banerjee, while addressing an election rally at Keshiyari in Paschim Medinipur district, accused the BJP of "forcefully" deleting the names of 90 lakh voters from the electoral rolls during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

She accused the BJP of "plotting to forcefully capture votes through fraudulent means as they don't have the guts to fight and win the elections democratically".

Sooner or later, justice will be served after the BJP's drubbing in the assembly polls and later their dislodging from power in Delhi, the CM said. —*PTI*

Bihar man held for threatening PM’s security

BUXAR, 11 APRIL

A man was arrested in Bihar’s Buxar district for sending a message to a US intelligence agency claiming that he could compromise Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s security in exchange for money, police said. The accused, Amal Kumar Tiwari of Simri locality, was apprehended on Thursday night. Police seized Tiwari’s mobile phone, on which they found multiple virtual private networks and some apps were installed, which were used to access the dark web. The police statement said that fake identity documents were also recovered from his premises, which were being used for cybercrimes. “During interrogation, the Tiwari confessed and also revealed that earlier he had been involved in threatening to hack Kolkata airport’s website,” police said. —*PTI*

—*PTI*

Bhujbal’s chopper lands in parking lot, misses helipad

PUNE, 11 APRIL

A helicopter ferrying Maharashtra Minister Chhagan Bhujbal missed the designated helipad and touched down at a location about 1,300 metres away in Pune district on Saturday, though he downplayed the incident by insisting it was “a smooth landing” and not an accident scare. Additional Superintendent of Police (Pune Rural) Ganesh Biradar said, due to some confusion, the pilot landed at a location about 1,300 metres away from the designated helipad. Speaking to reporters later, Bhujbal said it was not an accident scare. “The pilot could not spot the helipad and landed at a location meant for parking. It was a smooth landing and there was no issue,” the senior NCP leader said. —*PTI*

Congress, BJP spar over Vande Mataram row in MP

BHOPAL/INDORE, 11 APRIL

The ruling BJP and opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh targeted each other on Saturday over a controversy that erupted after a woman councillor of the grand old party in Indore refused to sing ‘Vande Mataram’ citing Islamic beliefs. While Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said all office-bearers of the state Congress unit should resign if they cannot take action against the councillor, the opposition party said it doesn’t need a certificate of patriotism from the BJP. The CM said Yadav that it was “unfortunate” that the Congress councillor refused to sing the national song in the Indore municipal corporation and “shamelessly” stated she would not recite it. —*PTI*

BJP using women’s quota against Oppn: Stalin

CHENNAI, 11 APRIL

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has said that his party-led alliance will win over 200 seats in the 23 April Assembly polls.

Launching a blistering attack on his rival Edappadi K Palaniswami and the BJP, he accused the saffron party of trying to use the women's quota as a "weapon" against the opposition. He also dismissed ED's allegation of corruption against his government.

The 73-year-old DMK president alleged that the Centre was not concerned about implementing reservations for women. “If their concerns were genuine, they could have done it right away. Rather than doing that, the BJP-led Centre is thinking of using it as a weapon against opposition and to take up the delimitation exercise based on population," he said.

"Hence, the women's reservation must be implemented immediately without showing delimitation as a reason," Stalin demanded.

On Palaniswami's "power centre" jibe thrown at his family, the Chief Minister said his government's initiatives, such as a women's rights scheme (Rs 1000 per month), being replicated in other states, will go down in history as an important programme.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK candidate from Kolathur constituency, MK Stalin, during a voter outreach, in Pudukkottai, on Saturday —*PTI*

Stalin flayed Palaniswami’s silence on delimitation. "We urged the union government that states which successfully implemented population control programmes must not be punished," he added

The DMK head also dismissed the Enforcement Directorate's allegations on TASMAC, sand mining scams as "Centre produced, ED-enacted dramas," and charged that the central agency has been turned "servile."

Stalin further questioned the AIADMK's track record in checking crime against women and accused it of ruining Tamil Nadu by transforming it into a warehouse for gutkha. —*PTI*

Annamalai denies BJP hand in 'Jana Nayagan' leak

Former Tamil Nadu BJP Chief **K Annamalai** refuted TVK’s allegations linking Union Minister L Murugan and the saffron party to the online leak of the movie ‘Jana Nayagan,’ describing such claims as "political indecency." Condemning the leak he urged the public to boycott pirated versions of the film and questioned the logic of dragging the party into the controversy. Superstars Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan and actor Suriya strongly condemned the leak of 'Jana Nayagan. —*PTI*

EC orders transfer of Tamil Nadu Home Secretary

The ECI on Saturday ordered the transfer of Tamil Nadu Home Secretary Dheeraj Kumar and appointed **K Manivasan** in his place. The 1993 batch IAS officer Manivasan has been directed to join immediately. Further, the release from the Election Commission of India said Kumar should not be posted in any election-related posts till the completion of elections. Earlier, the ECI ordered the transfer of Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary N Muruganandam and appointed senior IAS officer M Sai Kumar in his place. —*PTI*

Assam’s booth sees repoll after clashes

GUWAHATI, 11 APRIL

Polling was held on Saturday at a booth of Karimganj (North) assembly constituency in Assam’s Sribhumi district following clashes between supporters of the BJP and the Congress two days ago, officials said.

The repolling in booth number 239 at Babyland High English School commenced at 7 am and will continue till 5pm.

“Repolling is going on smoothly, and the momentum is expected to pick up as the day progresses. Arrangements for free and fair polling have been ensured,” the official said.

The re-election was ordered following clashes between supporters of the BJP and the Congress.

"There were reports of some issues on April 9, the polling day for the Assam assembly elections, and hence, the repolling was ordered,” the official said.

The booth has a total of 599 voters.

There are 14 candidates in the fray in this Barak Valley constituency, with a triangular contest among BJP's Subrata Bhattacharjee, Congress' Jakaria Ahmed and Choudhury Hibbur Rasul Usama Mabrur of the AIUDF.

The overall polling percentage in the constituency was recorded at 86.15 on Thursday.

Elections to all 126 assembly constituencies in the state were held in a single phase on April 9, with an approximate voter turnout of 85.91 per cent.

The final voter turnout figures are yet to be declared by the EC. —*PTI*

Bihar frames social media norms for govt employees

PATNA, 11 APRIL

The Bihar government's new rules governing the use of social media by its employees finally came into force.

In January, it approved the Bihar Government Servants' Conduct (Amendment) Rules, 2026, introducing stringent regulations governing the use of social media by government employees.

The amendment came into effect upon its publication in the Official Gazette on Friday.

Government employees are prohibited from expressing views on Facebook, X, and Instagram regarding government policies, or judicial decisions without prior approval.

Employees cannot use official email IDs or mobile numbers to create or operate personal social media accounts.

The use of fake profiles, anonymous identities, or pseudonyms to post content is also strictly prohibited. —*PTI*

Congress questions ‘huglomacy’ as Pakistan mediates US-Iran talks

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The Congress questioned the government's "failure" to prevent the US from according Pakistan the role of a mediator between the two warring countries despite New Delhi's diplomatic outreach to isolate it after the April 2025 Pahalgam attack.

This raises serious questions about "the self-declared Vishwaguru's huglomacy," said Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh, alluding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Jairam’s remarks came shortly before US Vice President JD Vance arrived in Pakistan to hold talks with an Iranian delegation led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. —*PTI*

PM Narendra Modi shared a rare cordial exchange with Cong’s leader Rahul Gandhi at Parliament complex on Saturday. Sources said Modi asked Gandhi about the health of his mother Sonia Gandhi, who was hospitalised recently —*PTI*

Women’s quota law not a political tool: Tharoor

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

Ahead of the special three-day Parliament session during which the women’s reservation law is expected to be amended, Congress Leader Shashi Tharoor on Saturday said the proposed amendments should not be a political tool that undermines federalism and vitiates the vitality of Parliament. He asserted that Congress is committed to a one-third reservation for women, but the same should be inclusive and fair. Sharing his pictures at the Congress Working Committee, which met on Friday to take a stand on the proposed amendments to the women’s reservation law, he said, “While the Congress has always championed the 33 per cent quota, and the first to introduce a Bill, the current government’s approach raises serious alarms.” —*PTI*

AMID FCRA ROW

Church-run daily hits out at ‘political schemers’

T’PURAM, 11 APRIL

A church-supported Malayalam daily on Saturday published a strongly worded editorial criticising “political opportunists” amid the ongoing row over proposed amendments to the FCRA.

The editorial in ‘Deepika Daily’ asserted that its stand would remain unchanged despite alleged threats and attempts to silence minority voices.

The hard-hitting editorial came a day after BJP leader PC George and his son Shone George made critical remarks against certain bishops over their reported stance during the 9 April Assembly polls.

Referring to laws framed in the name of the larger public but allegedly affecting minorities disproportionately, the daily warned against efforts to curb discussions on the FCRA.

“Even if political opportunists come forward with threats asking not to speak about the FCRA, our stand will remain the same,” the editorial said, adding that political “defilers” should not be allowed to hijack the issue.

Responding to the editorial, Shone criticised the newspaper, stating that its views cannot be considered as the official position of the Church.

He said there was no change in his stance and that he had already conveyed his views to church heads, adding that he would file an official complaint in the matter.

> **Kerala polling has been over, and all the reports indicate that the LDF has done well, and we expect the LDF government to come back**
>
>
>
> -Prakash Karat, CPI(M) leader

Meanwhile, Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala alleged that the BJP was trying to intimidate bishops and church leaders to make them support it, and said that such tactics will not work in Kerala.

He said that church leadership has the right to express its views, and that attempts to intimidate them into changing their stand will not be accepted in Kerala. —*PTI*

Voters’ list of 9 states, 3 UTs pruned by over 10% in SIR

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The combined voters’ list of nine states and three Union territories has been pruned by 10.2 per cent following the SIR exercise carried out by the Election Commission (EC), with over 60 lakh dead voters removed, data shared by the poll authority and its state officials shows.

When phase II of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls was announced by the EC on 27 October, the voter base across the 12 states and UTs stood at more than 50.99 crore. Post the exercise, the voters’ list stands at 45.81 crore — a decline of over 5.18 crore. In percentage terms, the electoral rolls have been reduced by 10.2 per cent.

As many as 66,88,636 deceased electors have been removed from the rolls, with the maximum of 25.47 lakh from Uttar Pradesh, followed by 24.16 lakh from poll-going West Bengal.

Additionally, 63.16 lakh names were deleted following objections and adjudication during the SIR exercise.

The second phase of SIR has now been completed with the final electoral rolls of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Puducherry, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Goa published on different dates. UP was the last state to release its final rolls. While the exercise, which kept EC in the news, had earlier been completed in Bihar, the second phase covering the above-mentioned 12 states and UTs, with nearly 51 crore electors, has now ended.

The remaining 40 crore electors will be covered across 17 states and five UTs when SIR kicks off, likely after this month’s polls to five assemblies. —*PTI*

—ANI

Builder EIL cheats homebuyers, ED seizes Rs 6.3 cr

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has seized Rs 6.3 crore in cash, and jewellery worth Rs 7.5 crore during raids on the Delhi-based real estate firm Earth Infrastructures Ltd (EIL), accused of defrauding homebuyers. The action under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was conducted on Friday across 10 premises linked to former directors, promoters, and associated entities in Delhi and Gurugram. The company has been undergoing insolvency process since June 2018. The ED's case was initiated after five FIRs by Delhi Police and a complaint from SFIO. The group collected Rs 2,024 crore from 19,425 customers but failed to complete projects. Funds were diverted for land acquisition or routed to shell companies. —*PTI*

—PTI

Kerala Vande Bharat stoned, suffers damage

PALAKKAD, 11 APRIL

A Vande Bharat train operating from Ernakulam to Bengaluru suffered minor damage after stone-pelting near Parali in Palakkad district on Friday. Police confirmed that no injuries occurred, but one window was dented. An officer from the Government Railway Police (GRP) said, "No one was injured. One of the train's windows suffered minor damage." The Railway Protection Force (RPF) has registered a case and is investigating. The officer added that the stones may have been thrown by a person of unsound mind or someone intoxicated. GRP and RPF teams are at the stoning site for conducting an investigation. —*PTI*

Autorickshaw strike in T'puram over police assault

THIRU'PURAM, 11 APRIL

Autorickshaw drivers at the Thampanoor railway station here held a brief strike on Saturday to protest against the alleged assault of a colleague by a railway police officer. An official said the incident occurred on Friday, and a case will be registered. The official explained, "We are recording statements. It was an officer of the railway police force." Drivers claimed the officer slapped a colleague for not removing his vehicle and kicked him. The strike ended after drivers were assured of action. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Kerala mahout killed in attack by elephant

THIRU'PURAM, 11 APRIL

A Tamil Nadu mahout died on Saturday due to injuries from an elephant attack. Police said the incident occurred on Friday while the mahout was feeding leaves. "As the elephant pulled the leaf towards itself, the mahout, who was holding one end, was dragged closer and gored in the torso by the animal's tusk," an officer said. During the incident, a portion of the elephant's tusk broke off. The man was rushed to hospital where he underwent surgery but died due to blood loss. No case has been registered so far. Statements from family and witnesses are yet to be recorded. —*PTI*

India, US to deepen N-ties, explore LPG contracts

US ready to help India's civil N-projects, coal gasification

WASHINGTON, 11 APRIL

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri discussed furthering energy cooperation with the US in nuclear power and new areas like coal gasification and LPG exports in his meeting with US Energy Secretary Chris Wright.

Misri's discussion with Wright focused on "advancing energy security, deepening bilateral energy trade, and identifying new avenues to strengthen the India-US Energy Partnership," the Indian Embassy here said in a social media post on Friday.

The US Ambassador to India, Sergei Gor, who was also present at the meeting, said the US is ready to cooperate with India in civil nuclear programmes in addition to other areas, like coal gasification and US LPG exports.

US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor meets Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri at Mar-a-Lago, in Palm Beach, Florida, United States —*PTI*

Later on Friday night, he hosted Misri at President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy Act (SHANTI Act) is considered the most sweeping reform in the civil nuclear sector in India.

The law, which came into force last December, opens up the tightly-controlled civil nuclear space for private participation. It also repealed the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) Act of 2010.

- Misri's discussions with Wright focused on advancing energy security, deepening bilateral energy trade, and identifying new avenues to strengthen the India-United States Energy Partnership

Air Chief Marshal AP Singh is also on a visit to the US. He visited the Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado Springs on Wednesday. He held talks with US Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Ken Wilsbach. —*PTI*

Centre asks SC to bar PILs, CJI says 'we're cautious'

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The Centre questioned the relevance of filing public interest litigations (PILs) in the Supreme Court and asserted that it's time to bar them.

The Centre made the argument during a hearing on the Sabarimala case on Wednesday. The Supreme Court told the Centre that there is no need to go down that path as courts are already cautious while dealing with PILs.

The case is over a constitutional challenge, on the balance between women's rights and religious freedom, and the Sabarimala temple's ban on girls and women aged 10 to 50.

While arguing in reference to the Sabarimala case review petitions, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta made submissions for the removal of PIL jurisdiction on Wednesday before a nine-judge Constitution Bench.

The PIL facility was provided so that poor people who had no access to courts, could redress their grievances through third parties.

In his written submissions, Mehta said that the premise on which the concept of PIL existed, that large sections of the population were structurally unable to approach constitutional courts, has weakened over the last five decades.

Mehta cited the Bandhua Mukti Morcha case and said the PIL jurisdiction began at a time when access to justice was limited. He said that with technological advancements and increased accessibility, including e-filing, people can approach courts directly

"In this day and age, why should such PILs be entertained?" he said, adding many PILs today are filed at the behest of undisclosed interests.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant told the Centre that recently the courts have become very cautious in entertaining PILs. — *Agencies*

Elderly man killed after slab falls on him in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 11 APRIL

A 75-year-old man died after part of a slab in a two-storey residential building collapsed on him in Mumbai's Bhandup area on Saturday morning, officials said.

The incident took place at Tulshipada in Patkar Compound, Bhandup West, around 9.45 am.

The civic official explained, "The victim, identified as Susai Daevdas Kaunder, was injured when some part of the slab on the upper floor of a two-storey structure fell on him."

He was immediately taken to nearby Navkaar Hospital, where he was declared dead, the official added. —*PTI*

22 RESCUED, 4 MISSING

Rescue personnel searching the Yamuna River looking for survivors after a boat carrying pilgrims capsized on Friday, near the Kesi Ghat, in the Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh —*PTI*

Mathura boat tragedy toll rises to 11, operator held

MATHURA, 11 APRIL

The toll in the boat tragedy in the Yamuna River in Mathura has climbed to 11 after the recovery of a body during a search and rescue operation on Saturday, officials said, adding that the operator of the ill-fated vessel has been arrested.

The in-charge of the health department's Rapid Response Team, Bhudev Prasad, said the body of a man was recovered from near Devraha Baba Ghat, almost a kilometre from the spot where the boat had capsized in Vrindavan on Friday.

The deceased has been identified as Manik Tandon, 42, a resident of Ludhiana, Prasad added.

Additional District Magistrate (Finance and Revenue) Pankaj Kumar Verma, too, confirmed that a body has been recovered.

Citing National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) officials engaged in the search operation, Verma said that although the search for the missing persons is currently focused within a 14-kilometre radius from the spot where the boat had capsized, there is a possibility that they may have been swept much further downstream.

- The boat's operator, Pappu, is accused of not giving life jackets to the passengers before allowing them to board, and driving the boat at high speed despite passengers' objections

So far, 22 people have been rescued, while four remain missing. The Army's Strike One Corps and the NDRF are engaged in the search for missing individuals.

Vrindavan police station SHO Sanjay Pandey said that the boat's operator, Pappu, was arrested late on Friday night.

He is accused of failing to provide life jackets to the passengers before allowing them to board the boat, and despite their objections, he maintained a high speed. This resulted in the boat losing control and colliding with a pontoon bridge, which led to the accident, officials said.

Earlier in the day, the capsized boat was retrieved, and no bodies were found trapped underneath it. — *PTI*

'Arbitration & mediation integral to justice system'

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

Arbitration and mediation are integral components of a responsive justice system and should not be viewed merely as alternatives to traditional litigation, Supreme Court judge Justice BV Nagarathna said on Saturday.

Speaking at the International Conference on 'Arbitration in the Era of Globalisation' organised by the Indian Council of Arbitration here, Justice Nagarathna highlighted the growing importance of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms in an increasingly globalised economy.

She said that there has been a discernible shift from the traditional mode of dispute resolution towards ADR mechanisms like mediation and arbitration.

Justice Nagarathna said arbitration has emerged as the most preferred method for resolving cross-border commercial disputes because of advantages like neutral forums, procedural flexibility, confidentiality and party autonomy.

She noted that the effectiveness of international arbitration is strengthened by the New York Convention, which allowed arbitral awards to be recognised and enforced across more than 170 jurisdictions.

- Justice Nagarathna said arbitration has emerged as the most preferred method for resolving cross-border commercial disputes due to its plus points like neutral forums, procedural flexibility, confidentiality and party autonomy

CJI Surya Kant said on Saturday that technology is no longer an administrative convenience, but has become a constitutional instrument and a tool that strengthens equality before law, expands access to justice, and allows the judiciary to transcend procedural rigidities."We must ensure that every court serves as an integrated digital court equipped not only with hybrid hearing facilities, but capable of functioning as a fully paperless court," the CJI said. — *PTI*

Ladakh gets new Aadhaar ID, J&K tag goes

LEH, 11 APRIL

Nearly seven years after being carved out as a separate Union Territory from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, Ladakh has finally secured a distinct identity in Aadhaar records, with 'Jammu and Kashmir' now replaced with 'Ladakh'.

The development, addressing a long-pending public demand, was carried out after the intervention of Ladakh Lt Governor VK Saxena, a spokesperson of the Lok Bhavan said.

Despite the formation of the Union Territory of Ladakh in 2019, the Aadhaar records of people of Ladakh continued to bear the name of the earlier state of Jammu and Kashmir in the 'State' field causing widespread hassles.

Taking serious note of the prolonged pendency in this matter, the L-G directed the Union Territory administration to resolve the issue at the earliest, the spokesperson said. Subsequently, the administration took up the matter with the UIDAI. The long-awaited correction has now been implemented, ensuring that Ladakh's regional identity is represented in Aadhaar, he added.

The continued reflection of 'Jammu and Kashmir' in Aadhaar records of Ladakh residents had been causing considerable inconvenience to the people. Residents were facing difficulty in using Aadhaar as a valid document for identity and address while availing various services, as the 'State' field in the Aadhaar did not correspond to the post-reorganisation status of Ladakh.

The issue not only created hardship for citizens but also affected proper representation of the Union Territory in Aadhaar-linked records and progress reports.

The L-G said the development would greatly benefit the residents of Ladakh by removing procedural hurdles and enabling seamless access to services. — *PTI*

DON'T BLAME JUDGES FOR CASE BACKLOG: SC JUDGE

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

Supreme Court Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah on Saturday said rising case pendency in India cannot be blamed solely on judges, pointing instead to delays caused by prolonged arguments and adjournments by lawyers.

"There is absolutely no connection between a judge and the disposal rate. It depends on the bar, and how long they want to argue," he said, urging the legal fraternity to introspect on practices that slow down proceedings.

Speaking at an international arbitration conference, Justice Amanullah highlighted the heavy workload on courts. Trial court judges handle 400–500 cases daily, with even higher numbers in High Courts. Despite fixed sitting hours, judges cannot always curtail arguments, as they are duty-bound to allow lawyers to fully present their case.

- There is absolutely no connection between a judge and the case disposal rate. It depends on the bar, and how long they want to argue, he said

"A judge may stop repetition, but cannot deny a lawyer the chance to argue, as something relevant may emerge," he said, adding that the length of arguments directly affects disposal rates.

He also pushed back against expectations of judicial dominance in courtrooms. "A judge should be neutral and open. Brilliance is not a requirement, as it may limit hearing," he observed.

Justice Amanullah was speaking during a session on alternative dispute resolution and its role in boosting economic growth and investor confidence. —*PTI*

6-year-old girl abducted and raped in UP

BUDAUN, 11 APRIL

A 30-year-old man has been arrested for the alleged abduction and rape of a six-year-old girl in Bilsi police station area here, police said on Saturday.

The incident took place Thursday night when the girl went to visit her maternal aunt at a private hospital, they said.

The accused Chandrakesh alias Gati allegedly abducted the girl from outside the hospital around 9.30 pm, took her to a deserted house, and raped her.

The girl managed to escape and, blood-stained, reached home where she narrated the incident to her family. The family rushed her to hospital and informed the police.

A case was registered immediately under Section 65 (rape perpetrated against minors) of the BNS and POCSO, and a police team arrested the accused on Friday night, SP (Rural) Hridesh Katheria said on Saturday.

After receiving initial treatment, the girl was admitted to a government hospital, where she is currently undergoing medical examination, and a detailed investigation is underway, he added.

—*PTI*

COUNTER TERROR OPS

Arrests expose nationwide social media radicalisation network

BIJNOR/BHUBANESWAR, 11 APRIL

Arrests across India have exposed a network of radicalisation linked to social media platforms.

In Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, two men were arrested for allegedly being in contact with a Pakistan-linked handler based in Saudi Arabia. Circle Officer Najibabad, Anjani Kumar Chaturvedi, said on Saturday that police arrested Uvaid Malik and Jalal Haider following a tip-off regarding their links with Aqib, a native of Sathla village in Meerut's Mawana area, currently staying in West Asia.

Police said Aqib came into focus after an Instagram video on 23 Novembershowed him displaying an AK-47 rifle and explosives. During interrogation, the accused allegedly said Aqib incited youngsters against Hindus and promoted anti-national activities online. Uvaid was reportedly planning to flee to Nepal on his handler's advice. The probe has now been handed over to the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS), with action taken against officials who earlier gave Aqib a clean chit. Delhi Police arrested, Sheikh Imran, from Bhubaneswar for suspected links with a terror outfit. Officials said he was identified after analysing social media activity of detained youths in Delhi. "Imran... was an active member of the radical group," the statement said, adding that devices were seized.

In another case, the Uttar Pradesh ATS arrested Mufti Zakir from Deoband for allegedly posting inflammatory content and maintaining contacts in Pakistan. Police said he used social media to "incite people" and spread misinformation, with his mobile records now under analysis. —*PTI*

Palakkad teen found dead in K'taka laid to rest

PALAKKAD, 11 APRIL

Hundreds of people on Saturday paid their last respects to Shrinanda, a Class 10 student, who had gone missing during a family trip to the Chandradrona hill range in Karnataka and was later found dead, at her residence in this north Kerala district.

The girl had been missing since Tuesday evening after she went trekking at the hill viewpoint in the neighbouring state.

A large number of people, including friends, schoolmates, neighbours and local residents, thronged her house at Kadambazhipuram, where the mortal remains were kept for the public to pay their last respects.

Relatives and friends broke down inconsolably when the body was taken for cremation. Locals said the deceased was active in both academic and extracurricular activities at her school. According to the Karnataka police, Shrinanda's body, first spotted with the help of a drone camera, was found in a deep gorge estimated to be over 1,500 feet near a waterfall, not far from the spot where she was reported missing.

- Police said a probe is on to ascertain whether the death was caused by an accidental fall or due to other reasons

Police said an investigation is underway to ascertain whether the death was due to an accidental fall into the gorge or any other cause, with all angles being probed.

The girl was part of a group of around 40 relatives who had travelled from Palakkad for the trip. — PTI

COOL CALM BEFORE THE HEATWAVE

Cattle graze by a lakeside in Bengaluru as egrets forage alongside them in the early morning hours, before the heat intensifies through the day. The birds, known for feeding on fish, frogs and insects using a still-hunting technique, were seen taking advantage of the cooler conditions. The scene comes as the City reels under an early-summer heatwave, with temperatures rising above normal. The India Meteorological Department has issued a heatwave warning, with the Bengaluru District Disaster Management Authority cautioning residents about staying indoors as maximum temperatures hover around 35°C

—MOHAMMED ASAD

Has Pak outplayed India in US-Iran war diplomacy?

The US-Israel war with Iran has resulted in mounting fuel shortages in India, its rupee currency is under pressure, and millions of Indians working in the Gulf are watching events unfold with growing anxiety.

However, one month into the war, it is Pakistan, not India, that is positioning itself as a mediator.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said earlier this week that Islamabad will soon host talks between the US and Iran, although neither Washington nor Tehran have yet confirmed Pakistan's diplomatic role.

By contrast, India has stuck to measured messaging. It has kept its head down and urged restraint, working quiet channels and prioritizing energy security and the safety of its diaspora.

Experts point out that internationally, Islamabad's role gives it immediate visibility and relevance, particularly in Washington, by positioning itself as a useful conduit at a time of high tension *—PTI*

OPPOSITION TURNS UP THE HEAT ON MODI

However, the government's stance has also been criticized by the opposition.

Rahul Gandhi, leader of India's opposition Congress party, called New Delhi's foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "universal joke."

Congress lawmaker Jairam Ramesh also criticized Modi's policies.

He posted on X that, following India's "undoubted military successes" in its action against Pakistan during Operation Sindoor in May 2025, "Pakistan's diplomatic engagement and narrative management has been markedly superior to that of the Modi government."

Experts point out that internationally, Islamabad's role gives it immediate visibility and relevance, particularly in Washington, by positioning itself as a useful conduit at a time of high tension.

INDIA MAINTAINS MIDDLE GROUND

Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, President of Mantraya, an independent research forum, said Modi's government has been portraying the conflict as a distant war that does not require intervention from India.

"This perspective contradicts earlier efforts to position India as a potential mediator in the Ukraine war, and also, the enormous impact the Iran war has already had on India's energy security," D'Souza told DW. "While this stance may not have impacted Modi's popularity at home, a prolonged conflict with economic consequences for India will likely influence the government's approval ratings," she said.

D'Souza added that New Delhi's lack of neutrality limits its ability to act as a mediator and undercuts its claim of strategic autonomy.

Harsh Pant, head of the strategic studies program at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), a New Delhi think tank, said much will depend on how long the war lasts.

"If the crisis continues, if the pressure on India grows, and if the government cannot handle that domestically, then there will be an effect on the Modi government," he told DW. "India's initial response showed solidarity with those Arab states, where relations have been growing and are very serious. India must protect its equity there," he added.

INDIA DOESN'T SEEK MEDIATOR ROLE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that India would not act as a "go-between" like Pakistan in the ongoing US-Israel war with Iran.

Jaishankar's comments counter suggestions that India should emulate Pakistan's role, underlining that New Delhi sees itself as pursuing an independent foreign policy and not acting as a middleman in conflicts driven by others.

Modi stated that while the West Asia war and Strait of Hormuz disruptions pose a "worrisome" challenge to energy security, the government is ensuring stable domestic supplies by utilizing strategic reserves, diversifying imports across 41 countries, and engaging in diplomatic de-escalation efforts.

Ajay Bisaria, a former high commissioner to Pakistan, said India faces no immediate domestic political fallout, but policy experts worry the country appears overly cautious and is not actively influencing events, especially compared to Pakistan's more assertive approach.

"Among strategic and policy circles, there is a quiet recognition that India is not shaping outcomes in a region where it has significant stakes," Bisaria told DW.

"The contrast with Pakistan's visible role as a go-between may raise questions about whether New Delhi is being overly cautious at a moment of geopolitical flux."

PAKISTAN'S WINDOW AS A BROKER

Yet, Bisaria stressed that Pakistan's role should not be overstated.

"Pakistan's utility lies in tactical facilitation. India's strength lies in its balance, multi-alignment, and long-term strategic autonomy. The challenge for New Delhi is to convert this posture into visible influence when the diplomatic window opens," he added.

"It is acting as a conduit, not a power broker. This is consistent with past patterns. Islamabad has historically facilitated US backchannel diplomacy, from the opening to China in 1971 to the Iran hostage crisis in 1981," said Bisaria.

According to the former diplomat, what Pakistan gains is visibility and relevance in Washington at a time when India has been sitting on the sidelines.

"That may translate into short-term diplomatic leverage or goodwill. But structurally, the balance with India remains unchanged. India's global weight, economic, strategic, and diplomatic far exceeds that of Pakistan's," he added.

—DW News

SALAR سالار

China turns to social media, AI to mock US

China's once rigid and dogmatic state messaging is undergoing a striking transformation. Having largely brought its domestic internet under control through tight censorship, Beijing is now harnessing social media and artificial intelligence to project its narrative globally, often with a sharp edge aimed at the United States and its leadership.

A recent example is a five-minute AI-generated animation styled after classic martial arts films. Produced by state media, the video presents an allegorical take on the conflict in Iran. A white eagle, symbolising the US, appears in regal attire, unleashing an ominous laugh before attacking a group of Persian cats dressed in black cloaks, representing Iranians. The cats, mourning the loss of their leader, vow revenge and block a vital trade route. Rich in metaphor, the animation blends themes of injustice, retaliation and strategic wisdom.

The short is part of a growing series of AI-generated content used by Chinese state outlets to portray the US as a global aggressor. These productions have also targeted policies associated with Donald Trump, including his past remarks on Greenland and ambitions for American dominance in the Western Hemisphere. Similar tactics are being adopted by pro-Iran groups, which are deploying polished AI-generated memes to mock both the US and Trump.

This shift reflects a broader push led by Xi Jinping to strengthen China's global communication capabilities. For years, Xi has emphasised the need for Beijing to better shape international discourse, counter what it sees as biased Western narratives, and assert a stronger voice in global affairs.

At the same time, the United States is increasingly alert to the influence of such campaigns. Recent State Department cables have warned that foreign digital messaging, particularly from state-controlled media, poses a direct threat to US national security and risks fuelling anti-American sentiment worldwide. The intensifying exchange signals a deepening global information war.

Experts say the use of AI-driven "infotainment" marks a significant evolution in China's strategy. Shi Anbin, a professor at Tsinghua University, notes that such content is especially effective in engaging younger audiences. By combining entertainment with political messaging, it makes complex geopolitical issues more accessible and appealing to Gen Z viewers.

In the video, a white eagle symbolising the US attacks Persian cats representing Iranians *—PTI*

- China's once rigid and dogmatic state messaging is undergoing a striking transformation. Having largely brought its domestic internet under control through tight censorship, Beijing is now harnessing social media and artificial intelligence to project its narrative globally, often with a sharp edge aimed at the United States and its leadership.

The Iran-themed animation, released by China Central Television on social media, has proven particularly successful. It quickly went viral within China, drawing praise for simplifying a complicated international conflict into a compelling narrative. Its reach expanded further when an English-subtitled version surfaced on X, attracting over a million views within days. Andrew Chubb, a senior lecturer at Lancaster University who studies political propaganda, observed that the video blurs traditional boundaries. Rather than overt propaganda, it resembles a stylised historical drama, a format that may make it more persuasive and less immediately recognisable as state messaging.

This approach marks a clear departure from China's earlier communication style. For decades, official messaging was characterised by dense rhetoric, slogan-heavy speeches and rigid ideological instruction. Party newspapers often carried formulaic praise of China's achievements while condemning Western influence. Many students and junior officials found such materials dry and disengaging.

As younger audiences began to tune out, Beijing adapted. Authorities have increasingly embraced informal online language, repackaging party history in more relatable forms. Rap music has been used to celebrate political milestones, while popular actors and singers are recruited to star in patriotic films. Even anti-corruption television dramas have been reimagined with gripping storylines and high production values. State media are now actively experimenting with digital-first formats. According to Wang Zichen of the Centre for China & Globalisation, the goal is to make messaging both engaging and effective. Whether through short videos, animations or AI-generated content, the emphasis is on resonance rather than rigidity.

Alongside content innovation, China has also expanded its distribution networks. The government has invested heavily in building a vast "matrix" of social media accounts spanning platforms such as X and Facebook. These accounts are operated by diplomats, state media outlets, influencers and, in some cases, automated bots, all working to amplify Beijing's preferred narratives.

Recent campaigns illustrate the breadth of this effort. In February, Xinhua released an AI-generated music video mocking US interest in Greenland, featuring a militarised bald eagle singing about acquiring whatever it desires. The following month, after a US-led summit on regional security, another video depicted the eagle imprisoning smaller birds under the guise of protection, with the line: "Sometimes, security comes with a little control."

—PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Shrinking space forces parties to defy convention of 'unopposed' bypolls

The long-standing convention of not contesting by-elections in constituencies following the death of sitting legislators is steadily losing relevance in Maharashtra, as electoral compulsions increasingly outweigh sentiment and legacy.

An analysis of bypoll trends over the past decade shows that more than three-fourths of such vacancies have led to contests, underlining the intensity of political competition in an increasingly fragmented landscape.

Traditionally, political parties in the state refrained from fielding candidates against the kin of deceased legislators as a mark of respect, allowing them a smooth entry into electoral politics. This informal understanding was once seen as an integral part of Maharashtra's political culture. Today, however, it appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

The upcoming Baramati assembly by-election, necessitated by the demise of NCP stalwart and then Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, is a rare instance where the older norm briefly resurfaced. A contest had seemed likely, but did not materialise after the Congress withdrew its candidate at the last moment. His wife, Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, is now the main contender, although a few Independents remain in the fray for the April 23 bypoll.

In contrast, several recent by-elections have seen intense contests. The Kasba Peth bypoll in 2023, held after the death of BJP MLA Girish Bapat, turned into a high-stakes battle. It was ultimately won by Ravindra Dhangekar of the Congress.

Similarly, the Chinchwad bypoll witnessed a multi-cornered fight despite the BJP fielding Ashwini Jagtap, widow of the late MLA Laxman Jagtap. The undivided NCP also entered the fray, but its candidate Vitthal Alias Nana Krushnaji Kate lost the contest.

The Andheri East bypoll in 2022 briefly revived the tradition. Following public appeals, the BJP withdrew its candidate, effectively giving a walkover to Rutuja Latke of Shiv Sena (UBT), the wife of the late MLA Ramesh Latke.

Such gestures, however, are becoming increasingly rare. Since 2014, more than 15 by-elections in Maharashtra, across both the Assembly and Lok Sabha, have been necessitated by the death of sitting members. Only a handful resulted in unopposed outcomes, indicating the declining relevance of the informal no-contest understanding.

Baramati bypoll, triggered by Ajit Pawar's death, saw Congress withdraw its candidate, leaving Pawar's wife Sunetra Pawar as the main contender with a few Independents in the fray *—PTI*

In constituencies such as Kolhapur North, Pandharpur and Bandra East, parties have defied convention and fielded candidates, prioritising electoral arithmetic and organisational strength. The Kolhapur North bypoll in 2022 saw an intense contest between the Congress and the BJP. A similar battle unfolded in Deglur in 2021, where the son of late Congress MLA Raosaheb Antapurkar retained the seat by defeating his BJP challenger.

In Pandharpur the same year, the BJP wrested the seat from the undivided NCP, signalling a clear departure from sentiment-driven politics. Earlier, in the 2015 Bandra East bypoll, the Congress fielded former chief minister Narayan Rane, but he lost to Trupti Sawant, wife of the late Shiv Sena MLA Prakash Sawant.

Political observers attribute this shift to the rising importance of legislative numbers and the fragile nature of coalition politics in the state. With each seat capable of influencing government stability, parties are increasingly unwilling to concede ground, even in sensitive circumstances.

The convention now survives only in exceptional cases, typically involving leaders with cross-party goodwill or where contesting may trigger public backlash.

A few instances still reflect adherence to the older practice. In Baramati, the likely walkover for Sunetra Pawar follows the Congress decision to withdraw as a tribute to Ajit Pawar. In Andheri East, Rutuja Latke's unopposed victory came after the BJP withdrew its nominee Murji Patel.

Earlier examples include the 2018 Palus-Kadegaon bypoll, where Vishwajit Kadam of the Congress won after the BJP candidate stepped aside to honour his father Patangrao Kadam. Following the death of former state home minister R R Patil, his wife Suman Patil won the Tasgaon seat without a major contest.

In 2014, Pritam Munde of the BJP secured a comfortable victory from Beed after the NCP chose not to field a candidate following the death of her father, senior leader Gopinath Munde.

However, political interests or lack of consensus have led to full-fledged contests in several constituencies, including Bhokar in 2024, Deglur and Pandharpur in 2021, and Bandra East in 2015.

Congress leader Ratnakar Mahajan said that sentiment continues to influence political thinking, though not always decisively. Senior journalist Prakash Akolkar argued that fielding relatives of deceased legislators often serves political interests rather than honouring legacy. He questioned why there is no discussion of an unopposed election in Rahuri despite a by-election being necessitated by the death of a sitting member.

BJP leader Keshav Upadhye said demands for unopposed elections usually arise from public sentiment attached to popular leaders who represented their constituencies until their death.

An analyst noted that calling for unopposed elections is generally inconsistent with democratic principles, except in rare and exceptional circumstances.

As Maharashtra's political landscape evolves, the balance between tradition and electoral strategy has shifted decisively. The era of uncontested by-elections appears to be fading, replaced by a more competitive and pragmatic approach that reflects the realities of contemporary politics.

—PTI

Gap between rich and poor nations widening: UN

UNITED NATIONS, 11 APRIL

A UN report has warned that the gap between rich and poor nations is widening as key global commitments remain unfulfilled. The report said promises made at last year's Seville conference, including reforms of major financial institutions, have seen little progress. The Seville Commitment aimed to bridge a USD 4 trillion annual development financing gap. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the global growth outlook has weakened due to the Iran war. The report also highlighted trade barriers and climate shocks as key challenges, urging urgent reforms and increased investment in developing countries. —*PTI*

— WIKIPEDIA

Prince Harry sued for defamation by his African charity

LONDON, 11 APRIL

Sentebale, a charity co-founded by Prince Harry for HIV-positive youth in Botswana and Lesotho, has sued him for defamation after he stepped down as patron last year. The charity filed the suit in London's High Court last month, citing a media campaign since March 2025 that caused operational and reputational damage. Harry and former trustee Mark Dyer are sued for libel or slander. A spokesperson said they "categorically reject these offensive and damaging claims". The lawsuit marks Harry's first as a defendant, after years of suing tabloids. Disputes over fundraising and leadership emerged in 2023, with allegations of bullying and harassment. —*PTI*

Protest in Hungary as 1,00,000 rally against Orban

BUDAPEST, 11 APRIL

Over 1 lakh people gathered at Heroes' Square in Budapest for a concert rally to oust Prime Minister Viktor Orban ahead of Hungary's elections. The event featured over 50 performers who criticised Orban's nationalist-populist government. Organised by the Civic Resistance Movement, the concert was described as a "system-breaking" show. The large turnout was largely of young people. Crowds raised slogans like "Russians go home," protesting Orban's ties with Moscow. The event was followed by livestream with over 1 lakh viewers. Centre-Right Peter Magyar has emerged as a challenger, galvanising voters against Orban's 16-year rule. —*PTI*

— WIKIPEDIA

Rapper Offset discharged after being shot

NEW YORK, 11 APRIL

Rapper Offset has been released from the hospital on Friday after being shot outside a Florida casino, a spokesperson said. Offset, one-third of the Migos, a popular hip-hop group, was shot on Monday night following a fight at the Seminole Hard Rock in Hollywood, just north of Miami. "Life's a gamble and I'm still playing to win," the 'Bad and Boujee' rapper said on social media. Officers have detained two people in connection with the incident, including rapper Lil Tjay, born Tione Jayden Merritt, who had an altercation before the shooting, the Seminole Florida Police Department said. Offset, born Kiari Kendrell Cephus, was married to rapper Cardi B. —*PTI*

Trump mocks Iran as talks begin in Pak

Says US has begun clearing out Hormuz as a favour to countries all over the world

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE, 11 APRIL

US President Donald Trump claimed that Iran lost the war as negotiators from both sides met in Islamabad to try and find a permanent solution to the war launched by Washington and Israel.

In a series of posts on Truth Social, Trump said on Saturday that Iran's military and leadership had been completely decimated by US-Israeli strikes, and that the Strait of Hormuz would soon be opened. He embellished the post with a "praise be to Allah".

"We're now starting the process of clearing out the Strait of Hormuz as a favour to countries all over the world, including China, Japan, South Korea, France, Germany, and many others," he wrote.

"Incredibly, they don't have the courage or will to do this work themselves."

He added that empty ships were "rushing" to the US to "load up" on oil, as the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil once passed, was closed.

However, he added that he was watching the fertiliser prices, as 30 per cent of the world's fertilisers used to pass through the Strait and the de facto closure has prompted prices to rise by over 50 per cent in several parts of the world.

"But, if you listen to the Fake News, we're losing," Trump added.

Field Marshal Asim Munir and DyPM Mohammad Ishaq Dar welcome US Vice President JD Vance, and later receive Iran's Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Abbas Araghchi for direct talks in Islamabad on Saturday —*PTI/PRESS TV*

> **If we negotiate with representatives of 'America First,' an agreement beneficial to both sides and the world is probable. However, if we face representatives of 'Israel First,' there will be no deal.**
>
> —Mohammad Reza Aref, Iran's VP

> **The Iranians don't seem to realize they have no cards, other than a short-term extortion of the World by using International Waterways. The only reason they are alive today is to negotiate!**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

> **Commending the commitment of both delegations to engage constructively, the Prime Minister expressed the hope that these talks would serve as a stepping stone toward durable peace in the region**
>
> — Shehbaz Sharif Office, Pakistan PM

> **I'm fed up with the fact that families and business' bills across the country go up and down on energy because of the actions of Putin or Trump across the world. (Downing Street said Starmer welcomed Pakistan's efforts)**
>
> —Keir Starmer, British Prime Minister

SECURITY BEEFED IN PAKISTAN

Meanwhile, security has been tightened in Islamabad, as Pakistan found itself mediating talks between the US and Iran.

Trump has said that military action would resume if a deal was not reached.

The Iranian government, posted on X the talks have entered the "expert level stage as economic, military, legal, and nuclear committees joined" as the US team led by Vice President JD Vance met with the Iranian delegation led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and includes Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi with other leaders.

"Negotiations continue at the Serena Hotel to finalise technical details," it added.

Both delegations were received at the Nur Khan airbase by Pakisan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and Minister for Interior, Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi.

The city was placed on 'red alert' ahead of the talks as more than 10,000 police and security personnel have been deployed.

TENSIONS HIGH AS DESTROYER NEARS IRAN

Several US Navy vessels crossed the Strait of Hormuz in a transit that was not coordinated with Tehran.

This marks the first such passage since hostilities between the two countries broke out, according Axios.

Iran's state media confirmed the movement of the destroyer and said that "if the vessel continues, it will be targeted within 30 minutes, and Iran–US negotiations will be impacted." —*Agencies*

'NO CEASEFIRE WITH HEZBOLLAH'

Lebanon, Israel to start direct talks on Tuesday

BEIRUT, 11 APRIL

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has said that direct talks with Israel will start next Tuesday. These will likely take place in Washington with the US State Department mediating.

The statement from Aoun's office comes after Lebanon and Israel's Ambassadors to the US held a call with Washington's Ambassador to Lebanon to discuss the terms of the negotiations.

Beirut is keen to hold direct talks to end the ongoing war between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group, but under a ceasefire or truce similar to that of Washington's talks with Iran.

However, Yechiel Leiter, Israel's envoy to the US, said that Hezbollah would not have a seat at the table and ruled out the possibility of a ceasefire with the militant group.

"Israel refused to discuss a ceasefire with the Hezbollah terrorist organisation, which continues to attack Israel and is the main obstacle to peace between the two countries," he added.

Hezbollah did not immediately comment on the development, though it has opposed direct talks with Israel.

During the past 40 days of war, more than 1,900 people in Lebanon have been killed in Israeli strikes and more that 1 million others have been displaced, according to government figures. —*Agencies*

Mourners in Syria's al-Sour pray over the coffins of six Al-Jalib family members killed in a Beirut strike on Saturday —*PTI*

Iran lost track of Hormuz mine sites: NYT

Iran is unable to fully open the Strait of Hormuz because it cannot locate all the mines it laid in the waterway, the New York Times reported. Iran has been mining the Strait with small boats, but it is unclear whether it recorded the placement of all the mines, the report stated. Salar could not independently verify the veracity of the claims.

Pak, Saudi reaffirm economic ties

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Finance Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan met Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other officials in Islamabad, as the reaffirmed commitment to expand mutual economic ties. The visit came just a day before the crucial peace talks between Iran and the US in the capital.

Palestinian youths stand in an area next to tents at a makeshift camp for displaced people, at sunset in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip —*PTI*

Gaza Board of Peace raises only $1B of proposed $17B: Report

WASHINGTON, 11 APRIL

US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace that is to oversee the reconstruction of the Gaza has received under USD 1 billion of the $17 billion pledged, Reuters reported.

Shortly before the US and Israel attacked Iran, several countries, including the Gulf Arab states had pledged billions for the governance and reconstruction of Gaza that was pulverised by Israeli bombardment.

However, only the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and the US have contributed money, a source told Reuters, adding that the "Iran war has affected everything". Another source reported that officials have told Palestinians and Hamas that "no money is available".

The Board rejected the allegations, writing on social media: "The Board of Peace is a lean, execution-focused organization that calls capital as needed. There are no funding constraints. To date, all funding requests have been met immediately and in full".

- "The Iran war has affected everything". Another source reported that officials have allegedly told Palestinians and Hamas that there is "no money is available" for the reconstruction of Gaza.

7 KILLED IN ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES

At least seven people were killed on Saturday by Israeli airstrikes on the southern parts of the Gaza Strip, Gazan officials said. Several people were also wounded in the drone strike near a police post in the Bureij refugee camp, four of whom are critical.

At least 700 people have been killed since the October ceasefire, with both Israel and Hamas accusing each other of violations. —*Agencies*

UK shelves Chagos island deal amid tensions with Trump

LONDON, 11 APRIL

- Under the agreement announced by the UK and Mauritius in May, London would pay £101m ($136m) a year to lease the UK-US airbase on Diego Garcia, one of the islands, for 99-year leaser.

The UK is indefinitely shelving its plan to hand over sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius amid a lack of support from US President Donald Trump.

UK officials have said they are not entirely abandoning the agreement over the island in the Indian Ocean, but have run out of time to pass legislation before Parliament is prorogued in the coming weeks.

Under the agreement announced by the UK and Mauritius in May, London would pay £101m ($136m) a year to lease the UK-US airbase on Diego Garcia, one of the islands, for 99-year lease. The base has supported US military operations from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan.

But Trump called the deal an act of "stupidity". Trump had also sought permission to use the base during the Iran war.

The UK government said it was looking to balance its relationships with Mauritius and the US. —*Agencies*

British PM Keir Stamer with US President Donald Trump —*WIKIPEDIA*

2 killed in Russian strikes on Ukraine ahead of ceasefire

KYIV, 11 APRIL

Russian drone strikes killed at least two in the Ukrainian city of Odesa overnight into Saturday, local authorities reported, ahead of a proposed ceasefire for Orthodox Easter.

A further two people were wounded in the attack on the Black Sea port city, when drones hit a residential area, damaging apartment buildings, houses and a kindergarten.

Russia targeted Ukraine with 160 drones overnight, of which 133 were shot down or intercepted, according to the Ukrainian Air Force.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defence Ministry said 99 Ukrainian drones were shot down overnight across Russia and occupied Crimea.

The strikes came hours before Russian President Vladimir Putin's 32-hour ceasefire over the Orthodox Easter weekend was set to take effect. Russian hostilities will stop from 4pm on Saturday until the end of Sunday, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he would respect if Moscow abided by the pause.

Previous ceasefire attempts have had little impact, with both sides accusing each other of violations. A possible prisoner exchange over the Easter holiday has also been discussed. —*PTI*

Russian drone strikes killed at least two in Odesa, Ukraine on Saturday, ahead of a proposed ceasefire —*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICE*

HISTORIC LUNAR FLYBY

Artemis II returns to Earth with splashdown

WASHINGTON, 11 APRIL

Amid claps and cheers, four astronauts of NASA's Artemis-II mission splashed down in the Pacific Ocean after a historic flight to the moon – the first by humans in more than 50 years.

The lunar flyby mission involving Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen was the first journey to the moon since the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972 when Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt spent three days exploring the lunar surface.

"The path to the moon is open but the work ahead is greater than the work behind," Amit Kshatriya, Indian-origin NASA Associate Administrator told a press conference shortly after the Artemis-II crew returned to earth off the coast of San Diego at 8:07 eastern time on Friday.

The four astronauts emerged from their bobbing capsule into the sunlight one by one.

Rick Henfling, the flight director, said the Artemis II astronauts are "happy and healthy and ready to come home to Houston."

Artemis II was the first crewed mission to utilise NASA's Space Launch System rocket and Orion crew module — demonstrating that the agency's equipment can propel astronauts out of Earth's orbit and bring them safely home.

Henfling said his team 'breathed a sigh of relief' once the side hatch opened on the Orion Integrity after it splashed down in the Pacific Ocean.

Henfling said his team felt "anxiety" as the four astronauts re-entered the Earth's atmosphere, but felt confident in all their training leading up the history-making lunar mission.

NASA said the Artemis III mission is "right around the corner" following its history-making journey around the moon.

"The next mission is right around the corner, and you know, we'll take the lessons learned from Artemis II," Henfling said. —*PTI*

Artemis II astronauts Reid Wiseman and Jeremy Hansen after their recovery in the Pacific Ocean on Saturday; Astronauts Victor Glover and Christina Koch celebrate following their safe return to Earth near San Diego, California —*PTI*

5paisa Capital's ₹469 cr issue oversubscribed

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

Digital investment platform 5paisa Capital's Rs 468.8 crore rights issue was oversubscribed 1.24 times, closing on Friday. The issue, launched on 27 March, received bids for approximately 1.93 crore shares against 1.56 crore offered. Priced at Rs 300 per share, shareholders could subscribe to one rights share for every two held. Shares settled at Rs 305.11 on the NSE, up 1.53 per cent. The deemed allotment date is 15 April, with shares credited that day and listed on NSE and BSE on 16 April. MUFG Intime India is the registrar. Founded by Nirmal Jain, 5paisa, India's first listed discount broker, offers services including equity, derivatives, mutual funds, insurance, and margin funding through its tech-driven platform. —*PTI*

— PTI

Sebi reaffirms open-door global investment policy

SAN FRANCISCO, 11 APRIL

Sebi Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey has assured international investors that India remains an open, attractive destination for global capital. Speaking at an event organised by CII and the Indian consulate, he said India's macroeconomic strength, expanding investor base, and reform-driven policies. He pointed to measures simplifying FPI registration, digital platforms, IPO growth, and domestic investor participation.

Pandey stated, "India remains open and welcoming to global capital. Sebi's approach is risk-based, facilitative, and focused on market integrity and stability." K Srikar Reddy noted India's rapid growth supported by reforms & digital infrastructure. The session focuses on regulatory clarity, cross-border investment, & growth-stage capital. —*ANI*

'Muted pricing power, rising costs hit cement sector'

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The Indian cement sector faces headwinds due to muted pricing power despite resilient demand, according to HDFC Securities. The brokerage observed pricing pressure in Q4 FY26, likely to persist amid trade disruptions and geopolitical tensions in West Asia. Despite steady demand, energy costs are expected to rise by Rs 200-300/MT and packaging costs by Rs 100/MT from mid-Q1 FY27. Demand remained firm in Q4, but prices, especially in trade, slipped beyond GST pass-through levels. EBITDA margins improved marginally to around Rs 970/MT. The sector's volume growth was approximately 9 per cent YoY, but price hikes of Rs 10-30/bag are being tested. The brokerage recommended focusing on companies with strong balance sheets, lowering target prices due to slow margin growth and capacity additions. —*ANI*

'India-US deal to start imports, will hurt Agri sector'

Farmers bat for MSP guarantee, loan waivers, & protection against land grabbing

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) on Saturday warned that the ongoing India-US trade negotiations could open the farm sector to imports and hurt domestic cultivators.

It renewed demands for a legal Minimum Support Price (MSP) guarantee, loan waivers and safeguards against land acquisition.

Addressing the AIKS 90th anniversary event, senior CPI(M) leader Prakash Karat said the AIKS had grown into the country's largest farmers' organisation and had played a historic role from the freedom movement onwards, mobilising peasants against British colonial rule and feudal forces.

"From the freedom struggle onwards, the Kisan Sabha has consistently raised the basic issues of farmers — land, remunerative prices and debt relief," he said.

Karat expressed concern over what he described as corporate-driven policies and external pressure on India's agricultural sector, particularly in the context of the proposed India-US trade agreement.

He said indications from the ongoing talks suggested that some agricultural imports might be allowed, warning that opening up the sector could adversely affect Indian farmers.

"So far, agriculture was not open to imports. The indications we have are that some agricultural imports may be agreed to," he said.

He said the AIKS was working alongside other farmer organisations under the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) to resist policies seen as harmful to cultivators.

AIKS president Ashok Dhawale said the current agrarian situatio was marked by growing distress caused by land acquisition, rising input costs, privatisation measures and weakening rural support systems.

He reiterated demands for a legal guarantee of MSP in line with the Swaminathan Commission's recommendation of 1.5 times the cost of production, farm loan waivers, pensions, land rights, employment, education and healthcare.

Referring to the farmers' agitation against the three farm laws, Dhawale said the year-long protest at Delhi's borders was one of the largest mass movements in independent India and had compelled the Centre to repeal them. —*PTI*

ACROSS ALL SEGMENTS

NSE rolls out nanosecond order acknowledgement

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

The National Stock Exchange of India on Friday said that it has deployed its Immediate Acknowledgement feature across Currency Derivatives, Commodity Derivatives, Cash (Capital Market), and Equity Derivatives from 11 April, delivering order acknowledgement in nanoseconds for median and mean observations, a significant improvement over the previous system response time of 100 microseconds.

NSE further said that under the enhanced process flow, every order sent to the NSE trading system now receives an immediate acknowledgement within nanoseconds. This real-time receipt confirmation is followed by the standard processing and confirmation or rejection message, ensuring that market participants can track order receipt instantaneously, with dramatically improved certainty and transparency. Currently, there is no other exchange in the world who is claiming to be giving response time in nanoseconds.

The exchange said the new immediate acknowledgement feature was introduced in a phased manner. The new feature for Currency Derivatives came into effect on 1 July, 2025 and for Commodity Derivatives, it was deployed on 13 December, 2025. The immediate acknowledgement feature for Capital markets/ equities and Equity Derivatives will come into effect from April 11.

NSE further noted that the advanced feature is a first in the world, and it will help enhance market transparency by providing Real-time order acknowledgement, which provides members with instant visibility into order receipt, eliminating uncertainty in the order lifecycle. —*ANI*

Sebi unveils 3 new IT platforms to boost ease in biz

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

In a bid to boost ease of doing business and strengthen cybersecurity oversight, Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) Chairman launched three Information Technology platforms on 24 March, the regulatory body said in a press release on Friday.

The initiatives - SUPCOMS, e-adjudication portal, and Cyber-Sec Audit Compliance (C-SAC) are aimed at streamlining communication, digitally enabling quasi-judicial proceedings, and enhancing cybersecurity supervision of Sebi-regulated entities.

SUPCOMS is a single universal platform for communications and replaces traditional email-centric interactions with Sebi.

It ensures all communications are easily accessible and creates a robust institutional memory. "This transition ensures that, going forward, all communications with external entities remain easily accessible for both Sebi and the entity," Sebi stated. —*ANI*

Delhi's draft EV policy offers 100% road tax ease

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

All electric cars with an ex-showroom price of Rs 30 lakh or less registered in the national capital will be granted 100 per cent exemption on road tax and registration fees till 31 March 2030, according to the Delhi government's new draft electric vehicle (EV) policy released on Saturday.

The draft Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy 2026-2030, uploaded on the transport department's website, also proposes a 50 per cent exemption for strong hybrid EVs.

"Electric cars with ex-showroom price above Rs 30 lakh registered in Delhi shall not be granted any exemption from road tax and registration fees," the draft stated.

From 1 January, 2027, new registrations of only electric three-wheelers shall be permitted in Delhi, it said.

"The Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy 2026-2030 builds on this momentum to accelerate electric vehicle adoption, improve air quality and create a supportive ecosystem for electric mobility. The policy will be applicable from the date of the notification," it said. An official order, Delhi government has invited feedback and comments on the draft policy from the public for next 30 days.

Launched in August 2020 as one of the key initiatives of the previous AAP government, the EV policy aims to tackle vehicular pollution and promote the adoption of EVs in Delhi. The policy's initial three-year term ended in August 2023 and the government has been extending it ever since. —*PTI*

X revamps creator payouts to reward original content

BASTROP/TEXAS, 11 APRIL

In keeping with its goal of building a richer timeline and to make X the 'world's most valuable platform,' the social media platform, earlier known as twitter, has decided to revamp its revenue sharing programme ensuring that high quality content is rewarded and low-quality ones are de-ranked.

This was announced by **Elon Musk** owned X's head of product Nikita Bier in a post on the social media platform. "For this creator payout cycle, we're experimenting with new tools to identify original authors of content and allocating a portion of revenue to them," Bier wrote.

The user of X is required to meet certain monetisation criteria to be eligible for creator payout. These include having subscription of X premium or Premium+, a minimum of 500 followers, and at least five million organic impressions in a span of three-months. The firm has maintained that verified users on home timeline would carry weight in payouts.

Further explaining, the X product head stressed that while reposts and commentary were important parts of X, the Revenue Sharing program must incentivize original, high-quality content.

"This means rewarding the effort it takes to produce something, not just the poster who helped it travel furthest," he said. Musk, however, had put a temporary halt to the proposed revamp. Bier had proposed that impressions from the poster's home region should be given weightage as against promoting popular contents in that country. —*Agencies*

Goyal holds talks with Saudi to boost supply chains

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday held discussions with Saudi Arabia's Trade Minister Majid bin Abdullah Al Qassabi on ways to strengthen supply chains disrupted due to the West Asia crisis, after holding talks with his counterparts from the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait.

All these countries are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with which India is negotiating a free trade agreement.

The Commerce Ministry, in a statement, said that Goyal had a virtual call with Qassabi.

Both sides noted the strain conflict has put on regional supply chains and stressed the need for an early recovery through coordinated efforts to ensure smooth trade flows, it said.

Goyal highlighted India's steps to support exports to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region.

The joint attack launched by the US and Israel on Iran had led to severe disruptions in the movement of ships in international waters, particularly to the West Asian nations.

The conflict has posed challenges for exporters to ship goods to the Gulf region, with which India had a bilateral trade of USD 178 billion in 2024-25. —*PTI*

Power equipment sector set for long-term growth surge: Report

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

India's power equipment industry is entering a multi-year expansion phase, driven by the country's accelerating energy transition and increased transmission investments, according to a JP Morgan report. The report states that high-voltage (HV) equipment manufacturers are experiencing a "decadal upcycle" as the grid adapts to a significant increase in renewables, supported by clear policy signals and a sharp rise in renewable capacity additions.

- India's ambitious clean energy targets, with a plan to add 470GW of solar and wind capacity over the next decade, will significantly boost demand for transmission infrastructure and related equipment.

India's ambitious clean energy targets, with a plan to add 470GW of solar and wind capacity over the next decade, will significantly boost demand for transmission infrastructure and related equipment. The report notes, "Large-scale transmission build takes 3-5 years... providing multi-year revenue visibility for HV OEMs," indicating sustained order inflows despite potential fluctuations in renewable commissioning timelines.

Annual transmission capital expenditure is forecasted at $8-9 billion, with HVDC technology emerging as a key enabler for long-distance renewable power transport. The report estimates a $14-15 billion HVDC opportunity over the next 5-6 years, reinforcing a robust medium-term demand cycle

Exports are also expanding as global grids upgrade to accommodate renewables and AI-driven data centre growth. The report highlights that exports are extending the cycle, with Indian manufacturers becoming competitive global suppliers amid rising global orders for renewables and grid upgrades.

The industry's favourable structure, characterised by limited competition in HVDC, tight supply-demand conditions, and operating leverage, is expected to support margin growth. —*PTI*

PROPERTY GATE SET ABLAZE

Man held for Molotov attack on Altman's home

SAN FRANCISCO,11 APRIL

A 20-year-old man was taken into custody after allegedly hurling a Molotov cocktail at the San Francisco home of OpenAI CEO Sam Altman late Friday, sources said.

According to sources, the attack set the property's exterior gate ablaze before the suspect fled on foot.

Altman, who was not at the residence at the time, publicly addressed the incident, calling it deeply unsettling. Police had apprehended the suspect shortly after the attack.

Authorities took the suspect into custody about an hour after the attack, locating him near OpenAI's headquarters, where he had allegedly been making threats to burn down the facility.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, who was not at the residence at the time, publicly addressed the incident, calling it deeply unsettling —*PTI*

The police have yet to release the suspect's identity or offer any insight into what may have driven him to carry out the assault. OpenAI acknowledged the events through an official statement, expressing gratitude toward the police for their swift action and for providing support to the company's staff in the aftermath.

Altman broke his silence not only on the attack but also on a recent exposé published by The New Yorker, which had levelled serious allegations against him.

Altman took to his blog to respond personally, sharing an image of his husband and child alongside a heartfelt message, "in the hopes that it might dissuade the next person from throwing a Molotov cocktail at our house, no matter what they think about me."

He has admitted to mishandling a significant dispute with OpenAI's former board, conceding in a blog post that his personal shortcomings have caused real harm to the company and those around it. The CEO described the fallout from the conflicts as both painful & serious, and extended an apology to those affected by his actions. —*Agencies*

Polavaram hydro project to boost Andhra's energy

POLAVARAM, 11 APRIL

The PHEP, which is part of the mega Polavaram project, is set to emerge as a major contributor to Andhra Pradesh's energy security, the government said on Saturday.

On completion, it will have an installed capacity of 960 MW, comprising 12 power-generating units of 80 MW each.

Featuring massive vertical Kaplan turbines designed to handle exceptionally high water discharge, each unit of the hydroelectric project is being engineered to operate at a discharge of 331 cubic metres per second at a rotational speed of 100 revolutions per minute.

PHEP emerges as one of the projects equipped with the largest Kaplan turbine units ever installed in India. —*PTI*

Anthropic blocks then reverses Steinberger's Claude AI access

SAN FRANCISCO,11 APRIL

Although Anthropic blocked the founder of AI agent platform OpenClaw citing 'suspicious' activities on Friday, the account was reinstated same day.

Peter Steinberger, creator of OpenClaw, on Friday went public with a disclosure that his Claude account had been suspended. He also shared an image of the email from the Anthropic which said that the account had been revoked.

"An internal investigation of suspicious signals associated with your account indicates a violation of our Usage Policy. As a result, we have revoked your access to Claude," Anthropic email to Steinberger read.

"Yeah folks, it's gonna be harder in the future to ensure OpenClaw still works with Anthropic models," He noted in the post. However, hours after revoking of the ban Steinberger again posted, "My account got reinstated. Thanks, folks!"

Responding to a post Steinberger spoke about the likely reasons for the ban.

"I've been working on getting the claude -p fallback feature working after Boris confirmed that it's a classifier bug and not intentional. We're still blocked and it seems that got me banned too," he said. —*Agencies*

Iyer leads by example as PBKS beat SRH by 6 wkts

Foundation for victory was laid by Arya, Singh, and Abhishek

MULLANPUR, 11 APRIL

Shreyas Iyer once again proved his worth as a leader and a batter, guiding Punjab Kings to a commanding six-wicket victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad in an Indian Premier League match here on Saturday.

After an astute piece of captaincy, Shreyas led by example with an unbeaten 69 off 33 balls to help PBKS chase down a daunting target of 220 with as many as seven balls to spare. The foundation for the victory was laid by a rollicking 99-run opening stand between Priyansh Arya (57 off 20 balls) and Prabhsimran Singh (51 off 25), after Abhishek Sharma unleashed a brutal onslaught with a blistering 28-ball 74 to power SRH to 219 for six. Sent in, Abhishek and Travis Head (38 off 23 balls) blew away the PBKS bowlers with a 120-run opening partnership in a mere 8.1 overs. The home team, though, made a fine comeback with the ball after Shashank Singh (2/20 in 3 overs) removed both openers in one over and, as a result, SRH, who were 120 for no loss at the start of the ninth over, ended inside 220. Xavier Bartlett (1/42 in 4 overs) bowled a brilliant final over to concede just five runs.

Abhishek smashed eight sixes and five fours. In reply, PBKS got the start they needed and raced to 93 for no loss in the powerplay, with the opening duo of Priyansh and Prabhsimran going hammer and tongs at the SRH bowlers. Left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey leaked 18 runs in the first over, providing PBKS with the perfect launch pad. Prabhsimran danced down the ground to get a couple of sixes, including one against veteran left-arm seamer Jaydev Unadkat, even as Eshan Malinga gave away 17 runs. Priyansh then hammered Harshal Patel for 6, 6, 4, 4 to race to a 16-ball fifty. Shivang Kumar raised SRH hopes by picking three wickets, but Shreyas completed the job for his side. Earlier, Abhishek got off the blocks quickly and launched into Arshdeep to collect 24 runs with the help of two fours and two maximums, including a straight six and another off a top edge over third man. Punjab Kings 223 for 4 (Iyer 69*, Arya 57, Prabhsimran 51, Shivang 3-33) beat SRH219 for 6 (Abhishek 74, Klaasen 39, Head 38, Shashank 2-20) by six. *—PTI*

MI look to bounce back on home turf against RCB

Five time champions now languish at 8th place

MUMBAI, 11 APRIL

Back in familiar territory after yet another slow start to their Indian Premier League campaign, Mumbai Indians will be keen to make the most of their return to home turf when they take on defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru here on Sunday.

For the first time in 13 seasons, MI made a winning start to an IPL season when they defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by six wickets here at the Wankhede Stadium nearly two weeks ago.

But the five-time title winners failed to build on it, as they lost both their away fixtures by big margins and are now languishing in eighth place with a poor Net Run Rate (-0.715).

Even as Rohit Sharma briefly held the Orange Cap, batting remains a concern for MI and a collective show would be the need of the hour against an opponent as robust as RCB.

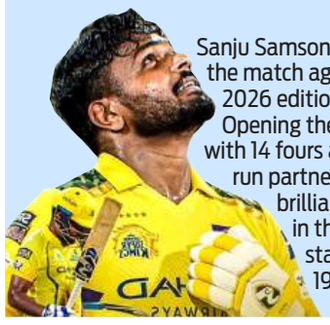
Despite lacking match-time, Rohit has emerged as the frontrunner among the MI batters where there are some concerns especially around the form of both middle order mainstay in Tilak Varma and Suryakumar Yadav.

Bringing back the left-arm spin of Mitchell Santner would be another option for MI, who continue to wait for the arrival of their English all-rounder Will Jacks.

RCB captain Rajat Patidar (142 runs), the indomitable Virat Kohli (129) and an in-form Devdutt Padikkal (125) form the batting fulcrum for their side who have hard-hitters in Tim David (99) and even Romario Shepherd and Venkatesh Iyer to play the role of finishers.

RCB won't be too concerned with Phil Salt's slow start to the tournament knowing Kohli's consistency at the top, where he can both accelerate or anchor the innings for others to capitalise. Match starts at 7:30pm IST *—PTI*

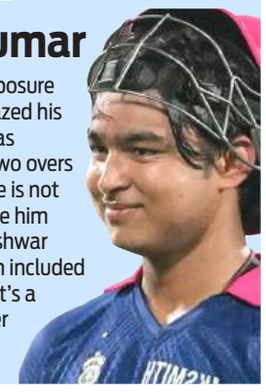
Sanju Samson slams maiden IPL 2026 hundred for CSK



Sanju Samson roared back to form and scored his first century as a Chennai Super Kings player in the match against Delhi Capitals at the Chepauk on Saturday. This was also the first century of the 2026 edition of the Indian Premier League and marks Samson's 4th ton in the league.

Opening the innings, Samson got to the three-figure mark in 52 deliveries in an innings peppered with 14 fours and 3 sixes as he kept Chennai on course for a decent total. He also brought up a 100-run partnership with Ayush Mhatre, who slammed a half-century of his own. After coming off a brilliant T20 World Cup where he helped India lift the trophy with scores of 97, 89, and 89 in the Super 8 and the semifinal and final, respectively, Samson did not get off to an ideal start for his new franchise. This was the 27th fifty for Samson in the IPL. He had scored 19 for RR and another seven for Delhi Capitals.

Sooryavanshi is too mature: Bhuvneshwar Kumar



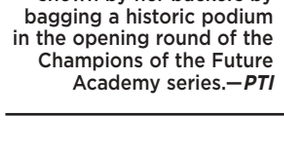
He may be just 15 years of age, but Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is already batting with a clarity and composure that defy his age, said Royal Challengers Bengaluru seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Sooryavanshi blazed his way to a stunning 78 off just 26 balls before Dhruv Jurel anchored the chase with an unbeaten 81, as Rajasthan Royals put past defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru by six wickets and two overs to spare, stretching their unbeaten run to four matches this season. "The way he is hitting shots. He is not slogging; he is hitting proper shots. For a 15-year-old, he is too mature. So yes, I think we should give him credit for the way he is batting, and he is batting really well. So he deserves all the credit," Bhuvneshwar Kumar said at the post-match press conference on Friday. Despite Sooryavanshi's onslaught, which included eight fours and seven sixes, Bhuvneshwar maintained that RCB never felt completely outplayed. "It's a T20 game, I mean. Yes, he is young, and he is batting very well. He is batting maturely, but we never felt that somebody was thrashing us.

-PTI

It is my biggest appeal: Vimal backs 21-point

NEW DELHI, 11 APRIL

Former India chief coach Vimal Kumar has made a strong appeal to the Badminton World Federation (BWF) to retain the current 21-point, best-of-three scoring format, insisting that it represents the true essence of the sport. The game's global governing body has proposed switching to a 3x15 scoring format from the current 3x21 system, with a membership vote on the change scheduled at the BWF Annual General Meeting in Horsens, Denmark, on 25 April. Following Ayush Shetty's sensational win over top seed and defending champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the semifinals, Vimal spoke to PTI about the scoring system and the evolution of the young Indian shuttler.—*PTI*



-PTI

Atiqa top-ranked female in FIA Int'l Kart Ranking

LONATO, 11 APRIL

Indian racing prodigy Atiqa Mir has emerged as the highest-ranked female in the latest FIA International Kart Ranking (IKR) in her category. The 11-year-old is placed in seventh overall position in the International OK-NJ class (age 12-14), making her the highest-ranked female racer in the rankings calculated by the motorsport's world governing body, the FIA. Zoltan Coigny of Switzerland leads the rankings. Atiqa, the first Indian to be supported by the Formula 1 Academy, was fast-tracked into the junior category (age 12-14) from the mini class (8-12) at the start of 2026, considering her special talent. She repaid the immense faith shown by her backers by bagging a historic podium in the opening round of the Champions of the Future Academy series.—*PTI*

Home form a concern as LSG bank on momentum against GT

LUCKNOW, 11 APRIL

Lucknow Super Giants may have unearthed a new star in Mukul Choudhary, but their poor home record remains a major concern as they host Gujarat Titans in their Indian Premier League clash here on Sunday.

Both teams head into the contest on the back of morale-boosting away wins. GT sealed a thrilling one-run victory over Delhi Capitals for their first win of the season, while LSG registered two impressive wins on the road against Sunrisers Hyderabad and Kolkata Knight Riders.

However, LSG have struggled to turn the Ekana Cricket Stadium into a fortress.

They lost six of their eight matches here last season, including five in a row, en route to a seventh-place finish, and overall, have managed just nine wins from 22 games at the venue. This season too, they started with a batting collapse at home, getting bowled out for 141 in the six-wicket loss to DC. With this being only their second home game this year, LSG will be desperate to set the record straight.

The team, though, will not be short on confidence after back-to-back away wins.

The last outing against KKR was particularly special, marking the emergence of a new 'finisher' in Mukul. The unheralded 21-year-old from Rajasthan lit up the stage with a stunning six-hitting display, powered by lightning bat speed and a wide range of strokes, including the trademark helicopter shot of his idol, MS Dhoni, to emerge as the latest IPL sensation.

Another positive is the return to form of Badoni, who struck a half-century against KKR to set up the chase. Rashid has been back to his best in the previous game against DC, returning with Player-of-the-Match figures of 3/17 that made the difference in their one-run win. Amid criticism that opposition batters had begun to decode his variations, Rashid responded strongly with a vintage display in the middle overs. Match starts: 3.30pm. *—PTI*

SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH TT

INDIANS EXTEND SUPREMACY WITH 13 GOLD MEDALS

SHIMLA, 11 APRIL

India won 13 gold medals in the South Asian Youth TT tournament -TTFI.ORG

Indian paddlers underlined their regional dominance, winning 13 gold medals across categories at the South Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships here on Saturday.

The tournament is also a qualifier for the Asian Youth Championships.

In the Under-19 boys' singles final, India's Priyanuj Bhattacharyya defeated compatriot Punit Biswas 3-1 to bag the gold. In doubles, MR Balamurugan and Mehan Senthil overcame a first-game setback to defeat Bangladesh's Abul Hasib and Nafiz Iqbal and clinch the title.

In the Under-15 Boys' section, Aditya Das produced a commanding performance to beat fellow Indian Akshay Kirikara in the final.

The doubles crown also stayed at home, with Rishaan Chattopadhyay and Akash Rajavelu prevailing in a closely fought five-game encounter against Nepal. In the girls' section, Jennifer Varghese rallied from a game down to defeat Ananya Muralidharan in an all-India Under-19 final, while Ankolika Chakraborty outplayed Aahona Ray to secure the Under-15 crown.

India completed clean sweeps in both girls' doubles categories as well.

Prisha Goel and Ditsa Roy captured the Under-19 title in straight games, while Sreejani Chakraborty and Tanishka Kalbhairav bounced back strongly after dropping the opening game to win the Under-15 final.

The mixed doubles events further highlighted India's superiority. Priyanuj and Jennifer dominated the Under-19 final, while Aditya Das paired with Ankolika Chakraborty to seal the Under-15 title without conceding a game. *—PTI*

- Indian paddlers underlined their regional dominance, winning 13 gold medals across categories at the South Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships here on Saturday

Arsenal suffer a shock defeat to Bournemouth

LONDON, 11 APRIL

Arsenal's Premier League title bid was hit by a stunning 2-1 loss to Bournemouth at home on Saturday.

The league leader blew the chance to move 12 points clear of second-place Manchester City after losing for the third time in four games in all competitions. Alex Scott struck a 74th-minute winner at the Emirates to pile pressure on Arsenal ahead of next week's top-of-the-table clash at City.

Arsenal's form appears to be slipping at a crucial point of the season. Defeats to City in the English League Cup final and second-division Southampton in the FA Cup ended its pursuit of a quadruple of trophies. *—PTI*

Britain beats Australia to advance to Billie Jean King Cup finals

MELBOURNE, 11 APRIL

-PTI

Britain advanced to the Billie Jean King Cup finals when doubles pair Harriet Dart and Jodie Burrage beat Australia's Storm Hunter and Ellen Perez 6-3, 6-4 to clinch the teams' best-of-five matchup Saturday.

The visitors had built a 2-0 lead Friday when 17-year-old Mika Stojsavljevic beat Talia, Gibson 7-6 (4), 7-5, and Dart topped Kimberly Birrell 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in singles matches at John Cain Arena.

In a consolation win, 17-year-old Australian Emerson Jones beat Katie Swan 7-5, 6-3 to make the score 3-1.

The finals of the Billie Jean King Cup, a women's team tournament formerly called the Fed Cup, will be held in Shenzhen in September. Host nation China qualified automatically. Six other finalists will be determined Saturday: defending champion Italy vs. Japan; Kazakhstan vs. Canada; Switzerland vs. Czech Republic; Slovenia vs. Spain; Belgium vs. United States; Poland vs. Ukraine. The losing teams will compete in November's Billie Jean King Cup Cup playoffs, which determine qualifiers for 2027. *—PTI*

ASIA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Shetty storms into Badminton final

NINGBO, 11 APRIL

India's Ayush Shetty stormed into the final -PTI

India's Ayush Shetty stormed into the final with a stunning three-game win over top seed and defending champion Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn, assuring himself of at least a silver medal at the Badminton Asia Championships here on Saturday.

The world No. 25 rode on his superior attack and robust defence to script a sensational 10-21, 21-19, 21-17 comeback win over Vitidsarn, the Paris Olympics silver medallist and 2023 world champion.

With the win, Ayush became the first Indian men's singles player after Dinesh Khanna to reach the finals of the prestigious tournament. Khanna remains the only Indian to win the men's singles gold at the continental meet way back in 1965. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty won the doubles title in 2023.

Ayush, the US Open Super 300 champion, will face either Chinese Taipei's fourth seed Chou Tien Chen or second-seeded Chinese Shi Yu Qi in the summit clash. The Indian didn't drop a single game coming into the final. But he had suffered a straight game loss to Vitidsarn the last time they faced off at the Arctic Open last year.

Ayush took time to get into the groove as Vitidsarn dictated play early with pace and precision, racing to a 4-0 lead with a body smash and maintaining a high tempo with sharp, angled returns that kept the Indian on the move. *—PTI*

Malen's hat trick gives Roma a comfortable win

ROME, 11 APRIL

Donyell Malen scored a hat trick as Roma beat Pisa 3-0 and inflicted a seventh defeat in eight games on Serie A's bottom club.

A marauding Malen cut a swathe through the Pisa defense after only three minutes to drive home the opener, and he doubled Roma's lead with a second from point-blank range two minutes before the break. His third, seven minutes into the second half, came courtesy of a lovely through ball from Matias Soule that Malen dispatched with aplomb.

The Dutch striker has been a standout performer since joining Roma on loan from Aston Villa in January. Friday's goals took his tally for the half-season to 10 in 12 league games. The result was nevertheless just the second win in eight games for Roma, which, during that poor spell, was knocked out of the Europa League and beaten 5-2 by Serie A leader Inter Milan.

Roma has risen to sixth, equal on points with Juventus, which has a game in hand against Atalanta on Saturday. Roma was also a point behind Como, which is at home to Inter on Sunday. *—PTI*